

# THE VISION

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Fall 2006

## Best in Motion

**O**n August 21, H-GAC and its Commute Solutions program hosted the 2006 Best in Motion: Commute Solutions Leadership Awards and Luncheon at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Houston. Each year, this event honors companies that have joined the ranks of Best Workplaces for Commuters, as well as local governments, employers, and individuals, for their contributions in improving air quality in our region.

The Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> program reached a milestone in 2006 by attracting more than 100 total member companies. 24 new companies were honored for joining the Best Workplaces for Commuters program, including ConocoPhillips, the Texas Medical Center, and Lockheed Martin Space Operations.

*continued on page 6*

## BEST WORKPLACES for COMMUTERS

in the Houston-Galveston Area



From Left to Right: Texas Transportation Commission Member John W. Johnson, H-GAC Director of Transportation and Air Quality Planning Alan Clark, Houston Mayor Bill White, and TxDOT Houston District Engineer, Gary K. Trietsch, P.E.

Graphics: TxDOT Photos: H-GAC

## HOUSTON REGION FREIGHT RAIL WORKSHOP



**O**n Friday, August 25, 2006 the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and H-GAC's Transportation Policy Council hosted the Houston Region Freight Rail Workshop. The workshop provided an opportunity for TxDOT to present findings from its Houston Region Freight Rail Study to local elected officials, freight rail operators and the public. Featured speakers included Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, Houston Mayor Bill White, and Gary K. Trietsch, P.E., TxDOT Houston District Engineer,

with a keynote address given by Texas Transportation Commission member John W. Johnson.

In 2005, the 79th Texas Legislature passed a law giving new and additional authority to TxDOT to implement and acquire, finance, construct, maintain, and with certain exceptions, operate passenger or freight rail facilities. In the same session, the Legislature created the Texas Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund. This fund creates a mechanism for TxDOT to issue obligations for

*continued on page 2*



meet the growing transportation needs of tomorrow.

The Houston Region Freight Rail Study, covering eight counties, is part of an overall statewide study. It is anticipated that the freight rail component of the final study will be completed in the fall of 2006, and will contain a proposed list of improvements categorized as short-, medium-, and long-range projects.

To review the listing of proposed projects, visit [www.houstonrailplan.com](http://www.houstonrailplan.com).

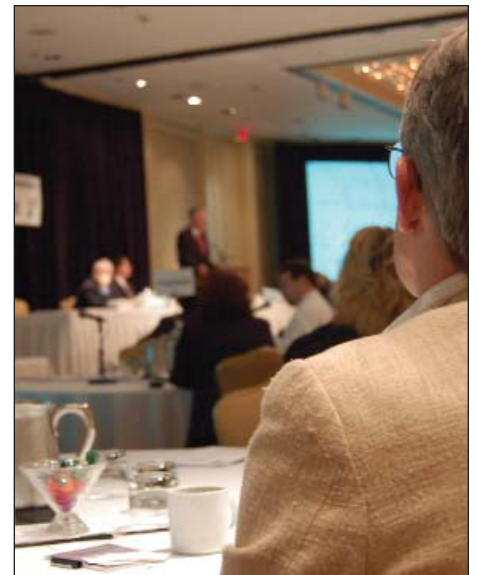
financing the relocation, construction, acquisition, improvement, rehabilitation, and expansion of certain rail facilities. Texas voters approved the creation of the Texas Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund in a November 2005 referendum.

Although approved by Texas voters, the rail fund currently is unfunded. During the upcoming regular session, the Texas Legislature may consider appropriating monies to this fund. In order to help the



Legislature understand the extent of the rail infrastructure needs and the associated investment required, the Texas Transportation Commission commissioned the Statewide Freight Rail Study.

This study will determine the amount of funding required to address the needs of our State's rail infrastructure and will identify a timeframe for implementation. Armed with this information, legislators will be able to help Texas



## Beyond the Vision

In the Fall of 2005, H-GAC and its community partners, engaged residents in the discussion of an alternate land use "vision." The priorities identified in the visioning process included, preservation of green space, more travel options, and jobs closer to homes. One of the many next steps in this process is to determine what types of transportation systems will be needed to support alternative land use scenarios.

H-GAC invited a small group of local and national experts to participate in a one-day exercise where they discussed alternative transportation system networks for the Houston-Galveston area. H-GAC will use this information in its analysis of the priorities developed for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a long-range transportation plan that describes goals and priorities for the region's multi-modal transportation system.

The success of the Envision Houston Region process has led to a new exercise that will take place in Austin County. After hearing about the Houston region workshops, Austin County Judge Carolyn Bilski invited H-GAC staff to discuss the possibility of similar activities with local city, county, and business leaders. The result of this meeting is an Envision Austin County workshop, which is being planned for January 2007.

H-GAC will replicate the exercises held throughout the Houston region in a one-day exercise for Austin County. Citizens, local leaders, and businesses will be invited to put their vision for Austin

County on paper. The participants will be broken into groups of 15 or less and shown maps that illustrate employment centers, neighborhoods, and transportation systems. They will be given the 2035



population forecast and asked to use chips to propose population and employment growth in the county. The chip sets will represent a variety of land use types, including residential neighborhoods, town centers, industrial areas, activity centers, agriculture, etc.

Austin County is the epitome of country living. Many citizens like the safe slow pace of the area and would like to see it stay the same. Community leaders understand that growth is coming to their county and that they must prepare for the coming changes in landscape. The goal of this exercise is to help Austin County prepare for the future growth in a way that holds true to the county's existing character.

For more information on this and other planning workshops, please contact Chris McGowan, 713-993-2459.

## What's Next?

### TIP Workshops

- **October 19, 2006** - Houston, TX - University of Houston-Clearlake
- **October 24, 2006** - Houston, TX - Montgomery College
- **November 1, 2006** - Houston, TX - H-GAC
- **November 2, 2006** - Houston, TX - Houston Community College-Stafford Center

### H-GAC Regional Telework Roundtable Event

- **October 26, 2006** - Trevisio Restaurant, Houston, TX

### Harris County RIDES/Coordinated Transportation Forum

- **November 2, 2006** - Doubletree Hotel, Downtown Houston, TX

### 1st Annual Traffic Safety Planning Conference: "Partners Embracing Safety"

- **November 16, 2006** - Renaissance Houston Hotel, 6 Greenway Plaza East

For more information visit [www.h-gac.com/transportation](http://www.h-gac.com/transportation)

## TIP Projects

H-GAC will host four Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Showcase events in October and November. The purpose of these events is to provide the public with an opportunity to view plans for new projects being undertaken by their local governments. Representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation will also be on hand to discuss transportation projects on the state roadway system.

The public is invited to review and comment on transportation projects submitted to H-GAC for federal funding

consideration. Projects eligible for consideration include sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities; transit capital projects; traffic signal synchronization; and others. Projects submitted for federal funding assistance are selected by H-GAC's Transportation Policy Council following a competitive evaluation process. Comments derived from the TIP Showcase events will be used in the evaluation process.

Additional information on the events is available by contacting Lynn Spencer, TIP Coordinator, at 713 627 3200 or via email at [lynn.spencer@h-gac.com](mailto:lynn.spencer@h-gac.com).

## TELUS Web-Based Project Submittal

H-GAC Introduces an operational web-based project information-management system developed in conjunction with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) called TELUS (Transportation, Economic & Land-Use System). TELUS is a fully integrated data management and decision support system.

H-GAC's TELUS provides detailed and easily accessible information on transportation projects in the region for the TIP and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). With TELUS, the process is open to citizens and stakeholder groups, not only for project selection, but for tracking project schedules, funding commitments, and related issues for the financially constrained TIP and the RTP. It will facilitate regular, effective and efficient communications among project managers, H-GAC staff, and the public with respect to all regional transportation projects.

TELUS incorporates elements such as a graphical user interface, an integrated geographic information system and strong querying and sorting capabilities. Authorized users may access, search and view through interactive dialog screens for data entry, data verification, data store, data retrieval and report generation. Project information is currently available to the public via the guest login:

<http://tip.h-gac.com/telus/WebTelus/Login>.

Graphic: H-GAC

### Southeast

Thursday, October 19th 6-7:30 p.m.

University of Houston-Clearlake, Bayou Building, Atrium II

2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston, TX 77058

### North/Northeast

Tuesday, October 24th 6-7:30 p.m.

Montgomery College, Academic Building A, Commons Area -1st Floor

3200 College Park Drive, Conroe, TX 77384

### Central

Wednesday, November 1st 6-7:30 p.m.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027

### Southwest

Thursday, November 2nd 6-7:30 pm

Houston Community College-Stafford Center

Leonard L. Scarcella Science & Technology Center, Lecture Hall W-102

10141 Cash Rd Stafford, TX 77477

## Regional Safety Conference

H-GAC and the Regional Safety Council (RSC) present the Partners Embracing Safety: Regional Traffic Safety Planning Conference, Thursday November 16, 2006 at the Renaissance Houston Hotel Greenway Plaza. The keynote speaker for the opening session will be Houston Police Department's Chief Harold Hurtt. The lunch session keynote address will be given by M.A.D.D. CEO Chuck Hurley.

The conference will serve to address the severe traffic safety issues facing our community and will point towards policies and action so that can be taken to reduce the high levels of crashes. The conference should help raise awareness among elected officials, government



Graphic: H-GAC

  
Houston-Galveston Area Council  
and the  
Regional Safety Council

**1st Annual Traffic Safety Planning Conference:  
PARTNERS EMBRACING SAFETY**

The Renaissance Houston Hotel – Greenway Plaza

6 Greenway Plaza East  
Houston, Texas 77046

**Thursday, November 16, 2006**

**8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

managers, transportation consultants, law enforcement officers, emergency medical service and public health personnel, and safety advocates in the region and across the state. The session will address recent efforts to improve safety including best practices for improving safety and will discuss safety issues that need legislation or outside support.

#### Topics to include:

- Safety Planning
- Pedestrians and Bicyclists Safety
- Reducing DWI Crashes
- Improving Freight Safety
- Reducing Aggressive Driving
- Improving Safety Information Systems

Seating is limited so please register early. For more information about the Regional Safety Council, safety studies, and to register for the conference, visit [www.h-gac.com/safety](http://www.h-gac.com/safety).

# Best in Motion

continued from page 1

With more than 200 people in attendance, the luncheon featured guest speakers Linda Casey, Senior Manager of Operations for McKesson Health Solutions, and Chairman Kathleen White of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The speakers congratulated Best Workplace companies for their commitment to reducing congestion and for improving the air quality of our region.

Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> is an innovative, voluntary business-government program that provides national recognition to employers offering outstanding commuter benefits such as free or low cost bus passes, strong telework programs, carpooling matching, and vanpool subsidies. Employers that meet the EPA's National Standard of Excellence in commuter benefits get are recognized on



From Left to Right: Guest speakers at the Best in Motion luncheon, Chairman Kathleen White of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and Linda Casey, Senior Manager of Operations for McKesson Health Solutions being recognized by Jack Steele, Executive Director of H-GAC. Below: The 2006 additions to the BWP list, KHOU's Jerome Gray, and Linda Casey.



the list of Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> — a fast growing mark of excellence in environmental leadership.

Through partnerships with public and private sector employers, Best Workplaces for Commuters is demon-



strating that alternatives to drive-alone commuting such as transit, carpools, and teleworking are economically beneficial, yielding value to workers, employers, and environment.

For more information about Best-workplaces for Commuters or Commute Solutions, visit [www.commutesolutions-hou.com](http://www.commutesolutions-hou.com) or [www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov).

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|---|---|
| <b>Andrews Kurth, LLP</b>               | <b>Lockheed Martin Space Operations</b>       |
| <b>Baker Oil Tools</b>                  | <b>McKesson Health Solutions</b>              |
| <b>Bury + Partners</b>                  | <b>Molitoris Group, Inc.</b>                  |
| <b>Cintas Corporation</b>               | <b>P2 Energy Solutions</b>                    |
| <b>ConocoPhillips</b>                   | <b>PFC Energy</b>                             |
| <b>Direct Energy</b>                    | <b>Porter &amp; Hedges, LLP</b>               |
| <b>Ecology and Environment</b>          | <b>RTS Marketing Research</b>                 |
| <b>GB Tech, Inc.</b>                    | <b>Texas Medical Center</b>                   |
| <b>Houston Downtown BWC District</b>    | <b>Texas Medical Center Area BWC District</b> |
| <b>Houston Transportation Institute</b> | <b>Total Petrochemicals USA, Inc.</b>         |
| <b>Houston-Galveston Area Council</b>   | <b>VPSI, Inc.</b>                             |
| <b>Hughes Christensen</b>               |   |

# Regional Coordination Plan Update

## Update: Public Transportation & the Road to Regional Coordination

H-GAC recently concluded a round of public meetings to discuss the coordination of public transportation services in a thirteen-county area. Nineteen public meetings were conducted as part of a larger effort to gather ideas and concerns from the general public regarding the coordina-

issues and the effect these issues had on the entire H-GAC region.

Concerns raised at the meetings focused on the general lack of public transportation in many areas of the region, particularly in rural areas. Many attendees raised concerns about Medicaid transportation including poor level of service and confusion about who is eligible for Medicaid transportation.

For more information on the Regional Coordination of Transportation Services Plan and the public meetings, visit [www.ridethegulfcoast.com](http://www.ridethegulfcoast.com).



tion of public transportation services in their local area.

The meetings were held in eighteen different locations across the Gulf Coast region, including at least one meeting in each of the thirteen counties represented in the region. Conducting the meetings in many different locations allowed a wide cross section of the region's population to voice their input into the project.

Anyone who felt affected by public transportation in their area was encouraged to attend. This led to participation in the project by a wide range of individuals, over 350 attendees, including the general public, advocacy group representatives, elected officials, social service agencies, transportation providers, and city, county and state officials. Such diverse groups led to very constructive dialogue about local

## RIDES - Coordinated Transportation Forum

On November 2, 2006, Harris County RIDES and the Houston-Galveston Area Council will host the RIDES Coordinated Transportation Forum. This event will introduce the recently re-named RIDES program, Harris County's specialized transportation service. RIDES, formerly known as the Harris County Coordinated Transportation Program, was initiated as a pilot program in October 2003. The program has proven to be successful in delivering curb-to-curb service. The program is available for people who are elderly, disabled, or low income and reside primarily outside the METRO service area that are unable to access alternate transportation.

For more information on RIDES, call 713-313-1765.

### Upcoming Meetings

**H-GAC Board of Directors**

Oct 17 .....	10:00 A.M.
Nov 21 .....	10:00 A.M.
Dec 19 .....	10:00 A.M.

**Transportation Policy Council**

Oct 27 .....	9:30 A.M.
Nov 17 .....	9:30 A.M.
Dec 15 .....	9:30 A.M.

**Technical Advisory Committee**

Oct 18 .....	9:30 A.M.
Nov 8 .....	9:30 A.M.
Dec 13 .....	9:30 A.M.

**Regional Air Quality Planning Committee**

Oct 26 .....	1:30 P.M.
Dec 7 .....	1:30 P.M.

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held at the H-GAC conference rooms on the second floor at 3555 Timmons, Houston, Texas 77027. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, H-GAC will provide for reasonable accommodations for persons attending H-GAC functions. Requests should be received at least 24 hours prior to the function. For additional meeting information call 713-627-3200.

## THE VISION Staff

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**Find us on the Internet!**  
[www.h-gac.com/transportation](http://www.h-gac.com/transportation)

# THE VISION

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The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is a voluntary association of local governments and local elected officials in the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region. The Gulf Coast Planning Region consists of Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, and Wharton counties. Organized in 1966, H-GAC provides a forum for the discussion of area-wide concerns, promoting regional cooperation through comprehensive planning and services to local governments.

## Regional Commuter Rail Connectivity Study

H-GAC is undertaking a comprehensive regional commuter rail connectivity study. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the feasibility, accessibility, and connectivity requirements of implementing commuter rail service along selected corridors in the eight-county H-GAC region. The selected corridors for this analysis will be identified from information gathered from the Statewide Freight Rail Study being conducted by the Texas Department of Transportation. Corridors will be ranked by factors such as cost, right of way availability, and capacities or freight volumes. Corridors will be ranked by



factors such as cost, right of way availability, and capacities or freight volumes. This study will review the routing viability along each corridor, potential ridership, potential station locations, and the operability, logistics, and chal-

lenges associated with connecting these corridors to the existing and proposed transit network.

For more information about the study visit [www.hgaccommuterrail.com](http://www.hgaccommuterrail.com).