Houston-Galveston Area Council

Regional Transit Framework Study

Governance

The new transit modes considered in the H-GAC Regional Transit Framework Study will require one or more agencies or entities to oversee project development, service operations, and program administration. The issue of governance will arise in response to concerns such as identifying sources of funds to support future regional transit investments and the application of uniform regional transit standards. Therefore, the scenarios contemplated in the framework may cause reason to consider a preferred regional transit governance structure (including the current governance structure) for the Houston-Galveston area. Three general governance models commonly used in other large urban areas include:

Single Regional\Local Transit Provider

Single regional\local transit provider agencies deliver transit services primarily through a single decision-making body that encompasses the broader region. Benefits of this governance model include the ability to apply uniform service standards and deliver a more coordinated regional transit network. A potential benefit or drawback, depending upon the beneficiary, is the possibility of an uneven distribution of transit services and facilities based on jurisdictional contribution to the system.

Jurisdictionally Based Multiple Transit Provider

Jurisdictionally based multiple transit provider agencies deliver regional transit services through more than one agency. While this type of governance structure is similar to the market based multiple transit provider model described below, it is primarily different in that jurisdictionally based providers do not typically have significant overlaps in service area or authority. One of the most obvious benefits of this type of governance structure is local control over decision making. Potential drawbacks may include non-uniform service standards and uncoordinated services. The transit service governance structure in the Houston-Galveston region is most closely related to this model.

Market Based Multiple Transit Provider

Market based multiple transit provider agencies also deliver regional transit services through more than one agency; however, one difference is that market based structures have allocated responsibilities for regional and local transit to different transit provider agencies. Under this governance model, regional services such as express bus, commuter rail, or other high capacity transit services are provided by one agency, while local services (single jurisdiction) are provided by a different transit provider or providers. Benefits of this governance model include the ability to apply uniform service standards for regional services, while providing local control over local services and freeing local transit providers from the potential burden of regional service operations. Drawbacks include the potential for non-uniform transit service standards between local transit providers and the regional transit provider.