



REGIONAL TRANSIT FRAMEWORK STUDY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In the coming decade, the Houston region can expect an additional one million new residents. Much of this growth will occur in suburban areas located 20 to 25 miles from the urban core of downtown Houston. While some job growth has occurred in suburban areas, jobs will continue to be concentrated in several large activity centers including Downtown Houston, the Texas Medical Center, Houston Galleria and the Energy Corridor.

Today there are several public transit providers serving different areas of the Houston region. The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) is the region's largest transit authority. It serves more than two-thirds of Harris County and a portion of Fort Bend and Montgomery counties. Fort Bend Transit, Island Transit, Connect Transit, The District and Colorado Valley Transit provide service in the smaller urban areas and in rural areas of the region. The Harris County Community Services Department provides demand-response service and commuter services in east Harris County.

Each of the service providers operates services using a variety of funding sources and variety of institutional arrangements. The small urban and rural providers, in particular, have been successful in culling resources from different areas in order to sustain and enhance their service and operations. Houston METRO has been working with them in many instances to integrate services.

STUDY INFORMATION

The Houston-Galveston Area Council's Regional Transit Framework Study (RTFS) will identify and prioritize future transit needs for the entire region. This study will provide a needs-based planning process for identifying and prioritizing regional transit improvements that will supplement the RTP through year 2040. The planning process will include a technical approach to identifying future travel demand and travel markets through an analysis of future growth patterns. Specific markets will be identified through a technical evaluation of high-demand travel markets and through an understanding of customer (traveler) preference and behavior.

The technical analyses of land use, socioeconomic conditions, existing and planned transit service, and infrastructure, along with the stated customer preference attributes will identify public transit needs, deficiencies, opportunities and constraints within the region. Following the completion of the technical analysis, transit service and transit capital/infrastructure recommendations will be developed to address the travel demand needs identified through the analysis process.

OBJECTIVES

Working with the stakeholders and service providers, the study seeks to:

- Develop a vision for regional transit through consensus building and public understanding;
- Identify the level and kinds of resources needed to enhance or expand existing transit services;
- Provide planning support to the transit providers and integrate those planning objectives into a regional framework;
- Foster connectivity between activity centers to strengthen the base for economic development;
- Enhance community mobility through a variety of modes that relate to trip purpose and length;
- Develop a 2040 regional transit plan.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A three-phase process lasting approximately one year is being undertaken to complete the H-GAC Regional Transit Framework Study in a schedule consistent with the statewide framework planning effort. The phases include:

Phase I: Research

Current and future regional travel patterns, travel markets, population growth and employment growth will be analyzed, while research will be completed to identify what other regions, similar to the Houston region, have done or are doing to address their regional transit challenges. At the end of Phase I, the most significant regional transit issues facing the study area will be defined.

Phase II: Develop and Analyze Options

Alternative transit scenarios that address the regional transit deficiencies, constraints and opportunities defined in Phase I will be developed and tested during Phase II. Cost projections for the alternative scenarios will be prepared for purposes of comparing each scenario and prioritizing the transit service and capital infrastructure elements included in each scenario.

Phase III: Study Recommendations

The characteristics and financial element of each alternative transit scenario will be refined during the final phase of the planning process to develop a final study recommendation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Providing opportunities for meaningful public input from a broad range of citizenry and developing a public understanding of the Regional Transit Framework Study are the primary goals of the public involvement process. Citizens will be engaged in the planning process through multiple activities including focus groups, telephone surveys, open house meetings and targeted events.

OUTCOMES

- Identification of costs and new funding mechanisms
- Planning recommendations
- Development of multiple scenarios with a preferred regional scenario

TASK	2009				2010								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
Public & Agency Involvement	[Yellow bar spanning Sep 2009 to Sep 2010]												
Research & Analysis	[Yellow bar spanning Oct 2009 to May 2010]												
Transit Travel Demand	[Yellow bar spanning Nov 2009 to Apr 2010]												
Evaluation of Needs & Opportunities	[Yellow bar spanning Dec 2009 to Jun 2010]												
Cost Analysis	[Yellow bar spanning Feb 2010 to Aug 2010]												
Regional Transit Framework Study	[Yellow bar spanning Apr 2010 to Sep 2010]												



For additional information about the study contact Shaida Dezfuli of the Houston-Galveston Area Council at 713-627-3200.

