

ACCEPTANCE OF HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT TASK FORCE REPORT

Introduction

The construction of new and ever wider highways cannot by itself support the expected growth of the Houston-Galveston region. A “highway only” mobility solution cannot serve the travel needs of a geographically, economically, demographically and culturally diverse region. An accessible solution is required that can connect to many residents and their destinations while moving large numbers of travelers within relatively limited rights-of-way. Therefore, the Transportation Policy Council (TPC) created the High Capacity (HCT) Transit Task Force to “*identify regional benefits, funding solutions and policy considerations to advance High Capacity Transit throughout the region, and to provide recommendations that could be included in the 2045 RTP*”. Their draft Report, Executive Summary and Appendices can be found [on the H-GAC website](#).

Background

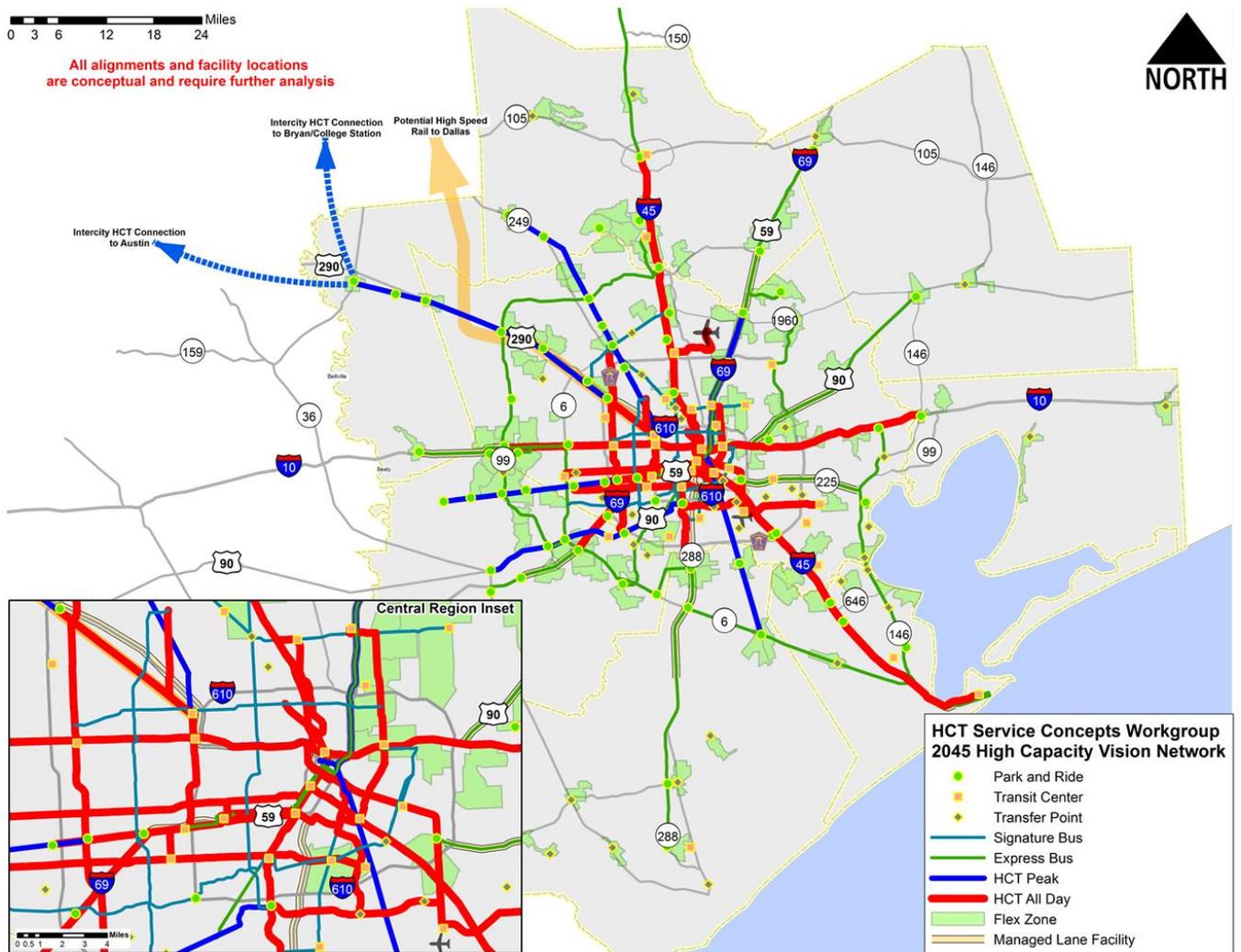
The Task Force began its work by investigating relevant examples and practices from other regions of the country and world. Based on desired service characteristics and other design criteria, the Task Force created a financially unconstrained **Vision Network**.

Compared to today’s regional transit ridership, the Vision Network yielded an almost a **tenfold** increase in today’s patronage and over **one half Trillion** dollars in direct benefits to travelers based on travel time savings, reduced vehicle crashes and increased personal income. Economic impacts included additional annual average job growth of over 94 thousand **jobs**, almost **\$19 Billion** in additional regional **GDP** and **\$40 Billion** in increased **regional output**. In addition to the Vision plan, the Task Force developed three less capital-intensive transit service scenarios whose economic impacts were estimated using H-GAC’s regional travel forecasting tools in conjunction with the Regional Economic Modeling Inc.’s (REMI) econometric model.

All High Capacity Transit capital expenditure scenarios generate regional economic impacts substantially greater than their investment costs. On the other hand, there is a “cost of doing nothing” if the region does not expand its transit network. The “No Build” scenario showed **\$84 Billion in additional costs** to travelers and a loss of personal income to the region, further reinforcing the need for additional highway and transit investment.

The Task Force also identified several strategies for additional transit funding including: federal discretionary funding for “New Starts” high capacity transit; private sector participation through joint development opportunities; and various value capture strategies. Other longer-range options include various forms of local option funding or state funding support that would require state enabling legislation and local voter support. Allowing transit projects to “compete” for eligible highway funding based on performance criteria established by TPC is also recommended.

High Capacity Transit Task Force Vision Network



The Priority Network

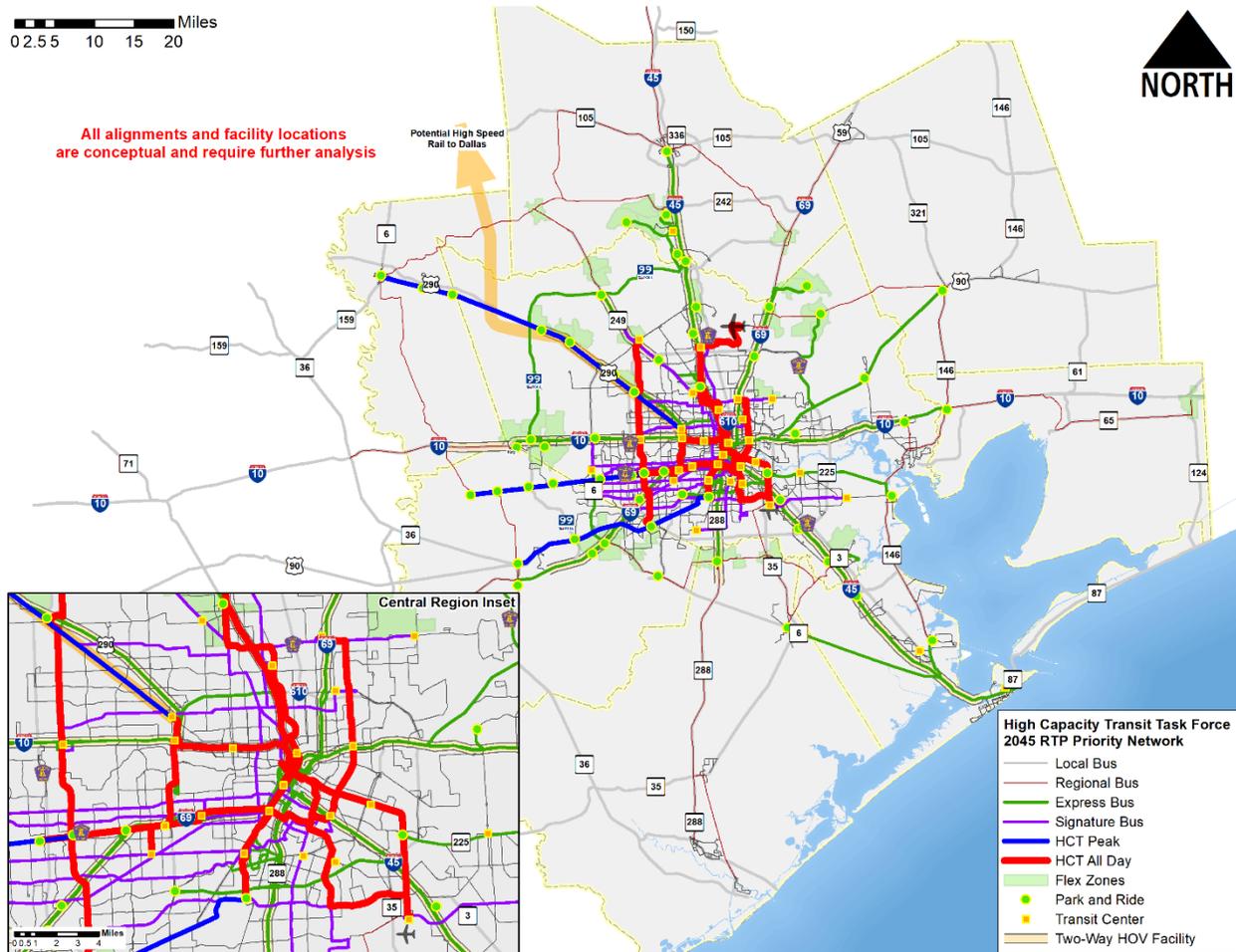
To create a financially-constrained transit network for inclusion in the 2045 RTP, elements of the Vision network were selected for inclusion in the “Priority” Network. The services indicated in the HCTTF Priority Network are mode, technology and alignment neutral. Significant features of the Priority Network include service to all eight counties in the H-GAC transportation planning region with new local, high capacity transit and other express bus services, particularly those that will expand access to “suburban” employment centers.

The capital components of the Priority Network are estimated to cost about **\$21.7 Billion** (2018 dollars), with an annual operating and maintenance cost of **\$1.14 Billion** (2018 dollars) at full build-out. Travel demand analysis of the Priority Network indicates that the network satisfies a

service demand representing over a three-fold increase in the number of fixed-route boardings the region's transit network carried in 2017 and 216 percent increase in passenger miles traveled.

As a direct **benefit to travelers** in the region, the total travel time savings, value of reduced vehicle crashes and increased personal income totaled over **\$520 billion**. The average annual increase in employment is approximately **65 thousand jobs**. With an estimated total investment of \$73.3 Billion, the benefit cost ratio is slightly greater than 7.

High Capacity Task Force 2045 Priority Network



Recommendations of the Task Force

1. Given current funding constraints, a prioritized level of investment in transit service contained in the HCT Task Force Priority Network, which includes services to all eight counties in the region, is recommended for inclusion in the 2045 RTP.
2. Concepts and policies that support the increased use of transit, such as those related to regional fare or Universal Accessibility, should be encouraged across the region.

3. Every investment in transportation that is made by the Transportation Policy Council should be viewed as an opportunity to advance high capacity transit concepts, either in support of transit priority on freeways and thoroughfares, or new transit services along freeways and tollways.
4. Development of any new transit service requires additional public engagement and planning, including that for financing and implementation.
5. Regional HCT Requires regional cooperation; the region must work together to examine opportunities, set priorities, develop new funding sources and “speak with one voice” when discussing its needs with decisionmakers at the state and federal level.
6. A Phase II of the High Capacity Transit Task Force effort is recommended, to continue examining in further detail issues related to regional transit priorities, implementation and funding.

Action Requested

Staff request acceptance of the High Capacity Transit Task Force report and incorporation of its recommendations including the proposed Priority High Capacity Transit network into the Draft 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.