

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Subcommittee Meeting

Houston-Galveston Area Council

Online Meeting/Conference Call

Wednesday November 4, 2020

1:30 PM

Agenda

1. **Introductions/Roll Call**
2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes (Chairman Smith)**
Wednesday October 7, 2020
Wednesday November 4, 2020
3. **Project Evaluation Criteria Development (Vishu Lingala)**
Staff will provide an update on the project development criteria and preview the upcoming progress report that will be presented to the Transportation Advisory Committee in the November 2020 meeting.
4. **Announcements**
 - TAC Meeting – November 18, 2020, 9:30 a.m., Teleconference (Zoom)
 - TPC Meeting – November 20, 2020, 9:30 a.m., Teleconference (Zoom)
 - TIP Subcommittee Meeting – December 2, 2020, 1:30 p.m., Teleconference (Teams)
5. **Adjourn**

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, November 4, 2020 – 1:30pm
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Online Meeting (Teams Platform)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matt Hanks – Brazoria County
Stacy Slawinsky – Fort Bend County
Adam France – City of Conroe
Christopher Sims – City of League City
Loyd Smith – Harris County
Frank Simoneaux – City of Baytown
Cory Taylor – Chambers County
Maureen Crocker – City of Houston, PW
Andy Mao – TXDOT HOU
Scott Ayres – TXDOT BMT
Ken Fickes – Harris County Transit
Ruthanne Haut – The Woodlands Township
Bruce Mann – Port Houston
Bruce Mann – Port of Houston
Mike Wilson – Port of Freeport
Oni Blair – Link Houston
John Wilcots - HISD

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Krystal Lastrape – City of Sugarland
Cliff Brouhard – City of Missouri City
David Wurdlow – City of Houston, PW
Priya Zachariah – METRO

BRIEFING

The meeting started with the rollcall of TIP Subcommittee members. Chairman Loyd Smith noted that there were a number of guests listening in. Approval of the October 4, 2020 meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

OVERVIEW

Meeting participants were briefed on the status of the Project Evaluation Criteria Development effort.

ACTION ITEMS

No Action Items

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments presented to the subcommittee.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 3 – Project Evaluation Criteria Development (Vishu Lingala)

(1) INVESTMENT CATEGORIES:

A mid-point progress report will be given to the Transportation Advisory Policy during the November meeting. The thirteen categories used in the 2018 Call have been consolidated into five investment categories:

- Major Investments
- Manage
- Maintain
- Expand
- Active Transportation

Vishu discussed the definition of each investment category and gave examples of projects that fit within each category. This information is available on the H-GAC website. A link to the H-GAC website discussing Investment Categories was sent with the November TIP Subcommittee meeting materials

Questions/Comments:

Maureen Crocker proposed that the definition of Active Transportation be modified to reference infrastructure that provide non-auto choices.

(2) DEFINITION OF TOTAL PROJECT COST:

The definition of Total Project Cost varies for different project types and/or scenarios. TPC guidance says additional benefit should not be given to projects because they provide more than the local match. This rule is meant to protect project sponsors that cannot afford project development activities and would be unable to compete with sponsors with greater resources. Total Project Cost was defined for three scenarios:

- (1) Projects implemented within existing footprint/existing roadway cross-section. No additional right of way is required.

- *Total project cost will include the federal funding request plus the local match amount. Estimated construction cost and engineering phase includes environmental clearance, even if federal fund request does not include engineering phase.*
- (2) Projects that may be implemented within an existing right of way or projects that are expanding the right of way but the additional right of way has already been acquired and no further right of way acquisition is needed.
- *Total project cost will be federal funding request plus local match as well as estimated construction cost and cost of engineering phase – even if federal funding request does not include engineering or right of way phases. Right of way acquisition cost may be inferred from appraisal district records.*
- (3) Projects requiring additional right of way acquisition, (no matter how small), due to expansion of footprint or new construction.
- *Total project cost will be federal funding request plus local match plus estimated costs for construction, engineering and right of way phases – even if federal funding request does not include engineering and right of way phases. Estimated right of way costs must be considered even if right of way was donated to the sponsor agency.*

These Total Project Costs apply to projects in all of the five investment categories.

Questions/Comments:

Priya Zachariah suggested that an unintended consequence of pre-acquired rights of way could be an onerous project cost which could be a disbenefit for the particular project.

Trent Epperson noted that it would be practically impossible to estimate the value of an existing right of way as part of the total project cost (middle scenario) in situations such as is found in municipalities that have adopted plats over a number of years with dedicated rights of way reserved for future corridor expansion. Using appraisal values from 10 years ago to score current TIP proposals would penalize cities for good planning practices.

Brue Mann proposed Active Transportation projects should include some commitment to maintenance of the facility.

Maureen Crocker suggested developing a right of way unit cost that could be applied to all projects, to avoid the reliability questions associated with appraisal district records. Catherine McCreight echoed Maureen’s idea but suggested that the right of way unit cost be established at the county level or some other local geographic breakdown, rather than at the regional level.

(3) METHODOLOGY – TOTAL SCORE:

Total project score will consist of Benefit/Cost Analysis [50%] and Planning Factors [50%]. Excluding the Active Transportation Category which has a different structure, the breakdown of total

score assessments are as follows:

Benefit/Cost Analysis

Safety – 50%

Delay Reduction – 30%

Emissions Benefits – 20%

Planning Factors

Scores and weights to be discussed

To give higher priority to Safety, the methodology for assessing the safety benefit/cost ratio proposed is: **Safety Benefits/Cost + Delay Benefits/Cost + Emissions Benefits/Cost**

Questions/Comments:

Bruce Mann questioned why, although the planning region was in non-attainment, emissions got the lowest priority in the Benefit/Cost Analysis.

Response → It may be a good idea to consider reduced emission benefits as a planning factor outside of the Benefit/Costs analysis. However, when considered within the Benefit/Cost evaluation, the actual quantity of emissions savings converted to dollar amounts was found to be significantly lower than the savings derived from improvements in delay and safety, supporting the decision that the latter receive higher priority. Also, across the three categories within the Benefit/Cost analysis, virtually all projects have a numerical and calculable value for safety and delay benefits. This is not the case for emissions reduction benefits.

Active Transportation Projects

Total project score will for Active Transportation projects is split as: Benefit/Cost Analysis [20%] and Planning Factors [80%]. This ratio was selected because of difficulties in calculating health benefits derived from Active Transportation projects. Comments have been received arguing for safety to have a higher weight in the Benefit/Cost analysis. New tools or methodologies to assess benefit/costs of Active Transportation projects are also currently being reviewed.

Questions/Comments:

Maureen Crocker posited that the benefits of “Maintain” projects would not be proportionate to those of “Expand” projects and would suffer a similar bias that was a concern to Active Transportation, therefore a similar restructuring of the Benefit/Cost analysis may be appropriate for “Maintain” projects.

(4) PLANNING FACTORS:

Planning Factors are still being developed. Factors under consideration include Planning Coordination, Transportation Equity as well as Connectivity to jobs, between transportation modes, and to planned or announced developments. Not all planning factors will be evaluated for every investment category.

Draft Timeline:

Mid-Point progress report will be given to TAC November. In April 2021, the draft evaluation criteria and selection process will be presented to TAC and TPC for information only. The project evaluation

criteria and selection process will be taken to these bodies for action in May-June, 2021.

Questions/Comments:

Mike Wilson introduced a new planning factor in the form of a question: “Does the project have an intersection with a high incidence of fatalities?” Addressing this may help the region achieve its safety goals faster.

James Koch urged staff to not to skew Transportation Equity considerations excessively towards urban criteria considering that a lot of the same issues of rural transit and providing connectivity impact rural areas too.

Lastly, the issues of Resiliency and Project Readiness were discussed by meeting participants to the extent these issues related to the TIP Call for Projects.

Item 4 – Announcements

Upcoming events

TAC Meeting – November 18, 2020 – 9:30 am Teleconference (Zoom)

TPC Meeting – November 20, 2020 – 9:30 am Teleconference (Zoom)

TIP Subcommittee Meeting – December 2, 2020 – Teleconference (Teams)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.