

TRANSPORTATION AIR QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, November 18, 2020 – 2:00 P. M.
Houston-Galveston Area Council of Government Offices
Virtual Teams Meeting

MEMBER PRESENT

Fort Bend Transit – Perri D’ Armond
Metro – David McMaster
The Woodlands Township – Todd Stephens
TCEQ – Jamie Zech
Houston Advance Research – Meredith Jennings
TAG Houston – Andrea French
Houston ISD – John M Wilcots
TXDOT – Charles Airiohuodion
Harris County Transit – Ken Fickes
H-GAC – Andrew DeCandis
H-GAC – Susan Jaworski

ALTERNATE PRESENT

City of Sugarland – Shahid Ali
Harris County Transit – Vernon Chambers
Houston ISD – Nicole Ware Barnett
TCEQ – Lisa Collins
H-GAC – Sandra Holliday
TXDOT – Brenda Bustillos
CenterPoint Energy – Michael Conklin
Port Houston – Kelli Gallagher
H-GAC – Veronica Green

STAFF PRESENT

Houston-Galveston Area Council – Cassandra Marshall
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Stephan Gage
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Gilbert Washington
Houston-Galveston Area Council – Thomas Gray

OTHERS PRESENT

Xiaodan Xu
Neal Ehardt
Justin Kuzila

BRIEFING

Overview

- a. The TAQ Subcommittee Members and Alternates were presented with actions items; discussion items were presented; and the meeting concluded with agency reports and no member announcements.
- b. Visit <http://www.h-gac.com/taq/transportation-committees/TAC/transportation-air-quality-subcommittee/agendas.aspx> to view the meeting materials for this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

ITEM 1A. Introductions

David McMaster called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves.

Meeting summary approved (8-12-20)

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 2A.

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEM 3A. Emissions and Air Quality Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Xiaodan Xu)

Xiaodan Xu gave an overview to the committee on the impacts COVID-19 has had on air quality and emissions. Discussion continued surrounding the contributing factors for future transportation and air quality issues. It was expressed, that was the motivation for the study. University of Maryland COVID-19 path work data provides us with the mobility data, public health data, and population data which is a great resource.

The state issued a brief stay at home order in April since that expired in May there has been no more issued so far. Data was collected from a mobile site tracking people movement within the states. The data shows the total miles traveled per person has dropped to the lowest point around April. Since the stay at home travel issue is slowly growing back.

Although, we do not have the reduction across all sections as for the work trips we may see some long-term changes. Two contributing factors that were mentioned: Employee work from home and high unemployment rate. Concern was expressed because, the unemployment rate started growing in March and it has reached 25% in early June. It declined slightly after that. Factors were mentioned that the correlation between unemployment rate and people that work from home are causing the work trips to reduce in Texas. It was pointed out that work from home is likely to become the new normal.

ITEM 3B. Result of Survey of Effects of Coronavirus on Regional Transit Providers (Thomas Gray)

It was brought to the committee's attention that back in March H-GAC wants to see how the various regions are being affected by COVID-19. Three major factors that were mentioned: our workforce, the economy, and the way we move. Discussion continued that surveys were done throughout the region to see all the affects the pandemic is having on ridership, and what mitigation measures they are taking to protect the riders as well as their employee's. They discussed the method of tracking by month. They expect to continue with this method until the pandemic is over. Staff pointed out that as tracking continues from month to month, we can see, who has added service back and who is making changes.

Staff showed from the survey that in September all agencies with the exception of Harris County has seen a dramatic decrease in ridership. A lot of changes that were mentioned included eliminating routes change in frequencies, change in park and ride service, and no services at all.

As discussion continued, the main concern is what happens when the pandemic is over, and people continue to stay at home and continue to work from home. Staff suggested that they will continue to offer surveys throughout the beginning of the year to track ridership changes. This will allow the region to see how this pandemic is continuing to affect our local transit agencies. Clearly, we don't know yet, we will find out as we continue through this new normal and things change.

ITEM 3C. Looking Forward to 2021 (Andrew DeCandis)

Staff gave an overview for the upcoming year topics. The first one being TIP calls for projects, an evaluation of CMAQ projects including our clean vehicles program, as well as TDM Van pool pilot projects. It was mentioned, the subcommittee will have to address these issues at the next TIP.

The committee was updated on H-GAC developing a Congestion Management process that is being led by Alan Rodenstein. Additional information will be communicated at our next meeting on the process. As well as future discussion to address the current state of COVID-19. Staff discussed connecting with Thomas Gray and Alan Rodenstein of the TDM program, the work they do is aligned with air quality and emissions. It was pointed out that their involvement and the information they provide would be beneficial and a good direction to go in for the new year.

Members were solicited to present topics for the upcoming year to the committee. Staff wants to make sure we are providing value.

OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 4A. Agency Announcements

- Alan Rodenstein announced the Congestion Management process report is available to view online. In further discussion, Alan identified congestion and its' causes applies to a variety of different strategies and evaluates their effectiveness.
- Andrew DeCandis updated the committee members on the Quality Performance Measure report which was approved by TAC and TPC in September and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and accepted.
- The members were informed that TCEQ, and TERP incentive program is now accepting applications which is specifically for retirement of Heavy-Duty Vehicles with large diesel engines. Further discussion continued that they are operating in Houston. This includes buses as well. There is nearly 35 million dollars available within the state and applications are being accepted until January 11, 2021.
- Sandra Holliday announced the Heavy-Duty vehicles are still open for lease without an option to buy.
- Andrew made the members aware of the process to start a bus inventory for the H-GAC region. If you own or operate buses H-GAC will be reaching out to get information from you. They will be soliciting help to find out how many buses are out there in our region, what their operating profile looks like, what are the ages, and what the buses emissions looks like in our region. More information will be provided at the next upcoming meeting.

ITEM 4B. Members Announcements

No Announcements

Next meeting: February 05, 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:30P.M.