



# Implementing Commuter Transit through CMAQ and Other Means



**Alan Rodenstein**  
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Transportation Air Quality Subcommittee

Regional Collaboration • Transportation Planning • Multimodal Mobility



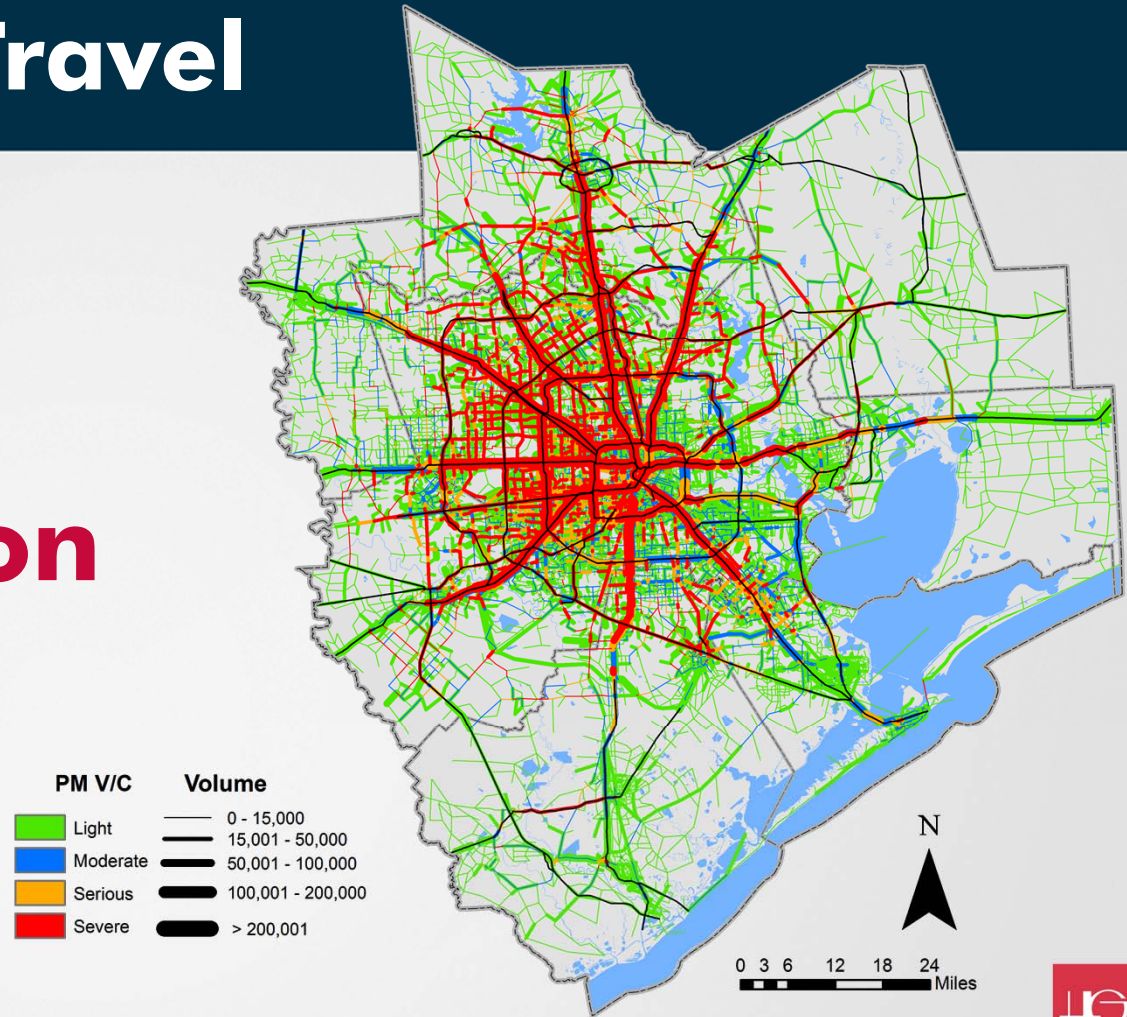
# Presentation Summary

- How commuter bus service has evolved
- Changes to enhance service
- Results of changes
- Next Steps



# 2045 Projected Travel

## 2045 Congestion

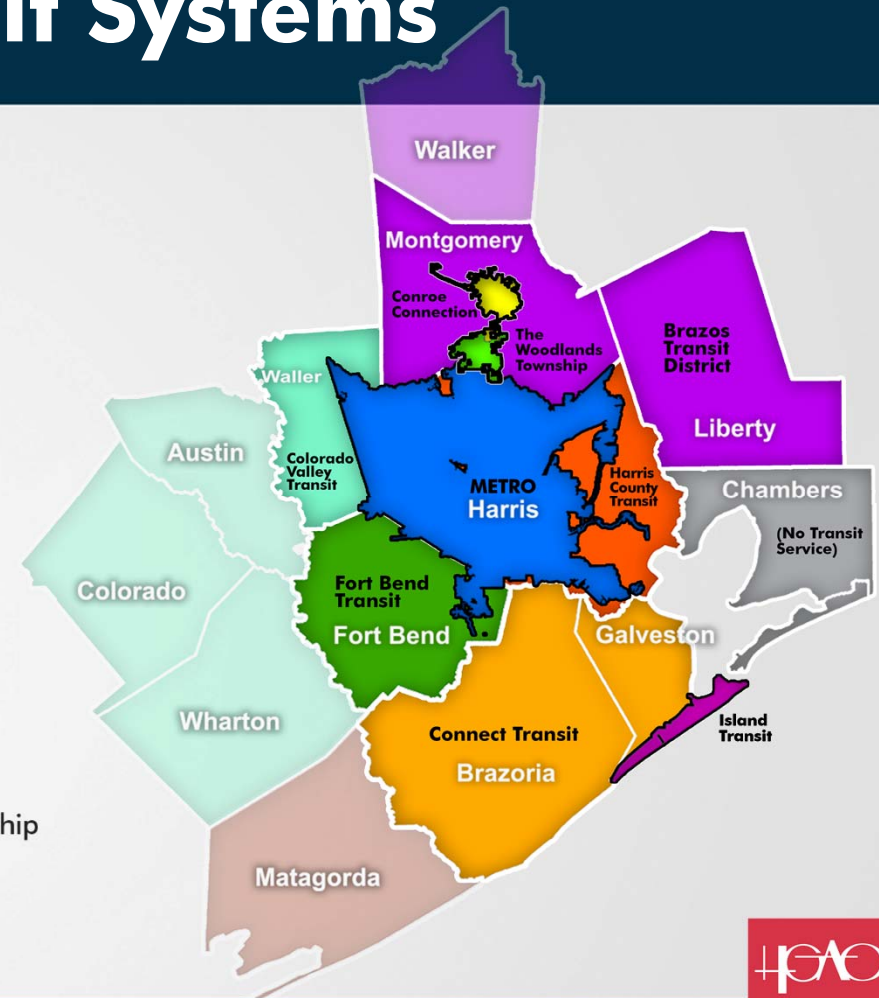


# METRO & Regional Transit Systems

- 9 total transit providers
- 6 now provide Commuter Bus/Park and Ride
- Regional Transit is non-METRO

## REGIONAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS

 Brazos Transit District	 Conroe Connection
 Colorado Valley Transit	 Harris County Transit
 Connect Transit	 METRO
 Fort Bend Transit	 The Woodlands Township
 No Transit Service	 Island Transit



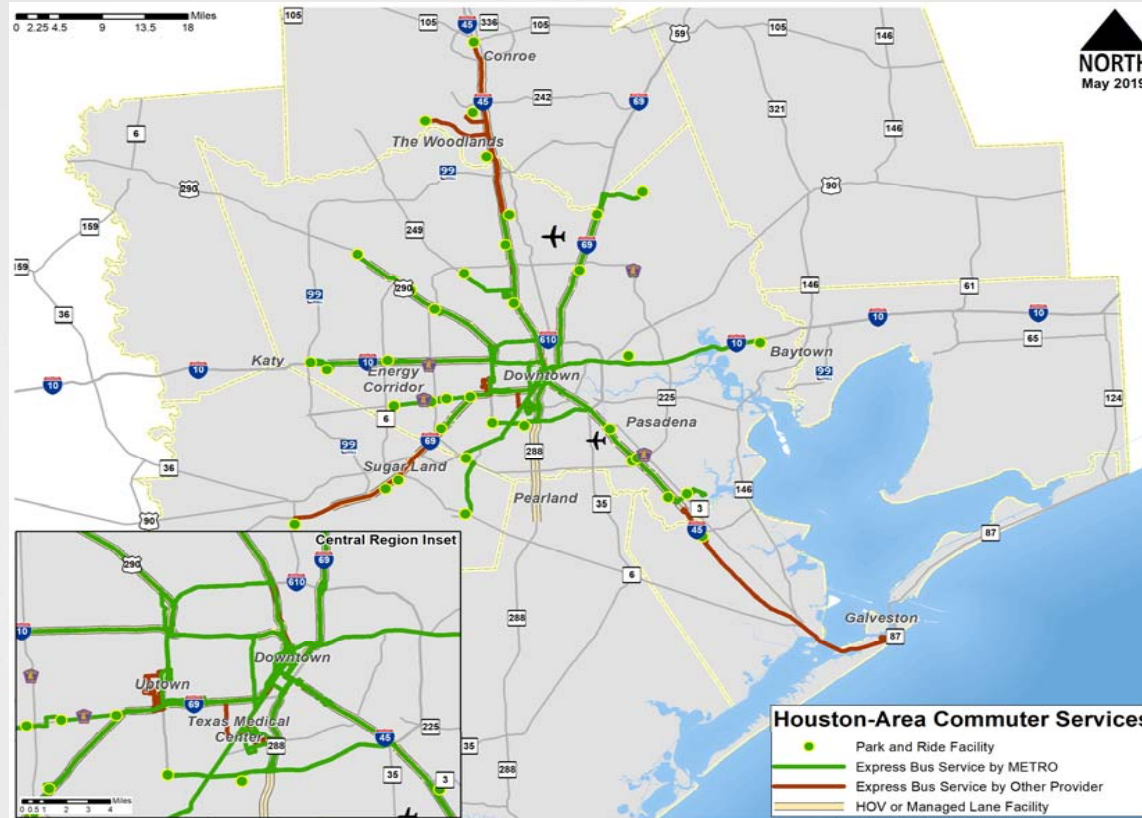
# Commuter Bus Service

- Flexible transit mode at relatively low cost
- In Houston, commuter bus benefits by extensive barrier separated HOV/HOT network
- Best for areas of moderate suburban demand
- Works as interim fix for high suburban demand
- Viewed positively by non-dependent riders

# Houston's Commuter Bus Service

- Started with advent of Houston METRO (1978)
- Expanded rapidly in 1980's and 1990's
- Regional transit service grew from 2000 to 2013
- More distant areas served by regional providers
- Migration of large employers to suburban job centers

# Commuter Bus Service in the Region



# CMAQ and Commuter Bus

- H-GAC served as “Local Government” with pilot programs since 1999
- Heavily used for regional commuter bus service last 15 years
- As a Non Attainment area needs to reduce NOx emissions
- Looks for long term sustainability



# Key Problems Recently

- Regional population growing rapidly and outward
- Little or no commuter bus expansion in fastest growing area(s)
- No source of dedicated local funding for any regional transit services
- Region falling further behind in transit commuter share
- Implementing projects and generating applications

# Problem Approach

- Work closely with transit agencies and municipalities
- Develop forward looking concepts in CMAQ Request for Applications
- Increase revenue – Advanced Funding Agreements
- Intensive outreach and preapplication meetings
- Once application received and approved - partner closely with transit provider

# Collaboration and Innovation

- Provider situations are different
- Most involve CMAQ funding
- All involve coordination with H-GAC and transit providers
- Many are innovative and all meet regional needs
- Emphasis on more distant transit services

# Results

- **Conroe – Implemented April 1** with innovative **Intergovernmental Agreement with METRO**
- **The Woodlands – Energy Corridor** – Suburb to suburb service (very tentative Fall 2019)
- **Pearland** – Private **for profit** commuter transit service (tentative July 8)
- **Fort Bend County** – Service to Downtown Houston (late 2019/early 2020)

# # 1 Conroe – Implementing Distant Service with a METRO Partnership

- Conroe city over 100K
- City has small fixed route/ADA service
- Unable to find commuter service provider
- METRO 1<sup>st</sup> time contracting with Conroe as service provider
- Succeeded in implementing northernmost service - 46 miles

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Conroe Bus Going Into Revenue Service



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# Conroe – April 1 2019

- Service has grown steadily in first month of service.
- Map shows Downtown Houston and Texas Medical Center Service.
- Park and Ride actually under IH-45



# #2 – The Woodlands – Energy Corridor

- The first suburb to suburb service in region
- Energy Corridor District (ECD) has 85K plus employees
- Shell, Conoco, BP and other large employers located in ECD
- Multiple surveys showed consistently high transit demand for service
- 50 mile trip
- Route used is protected (HOV lanes) from general traffic



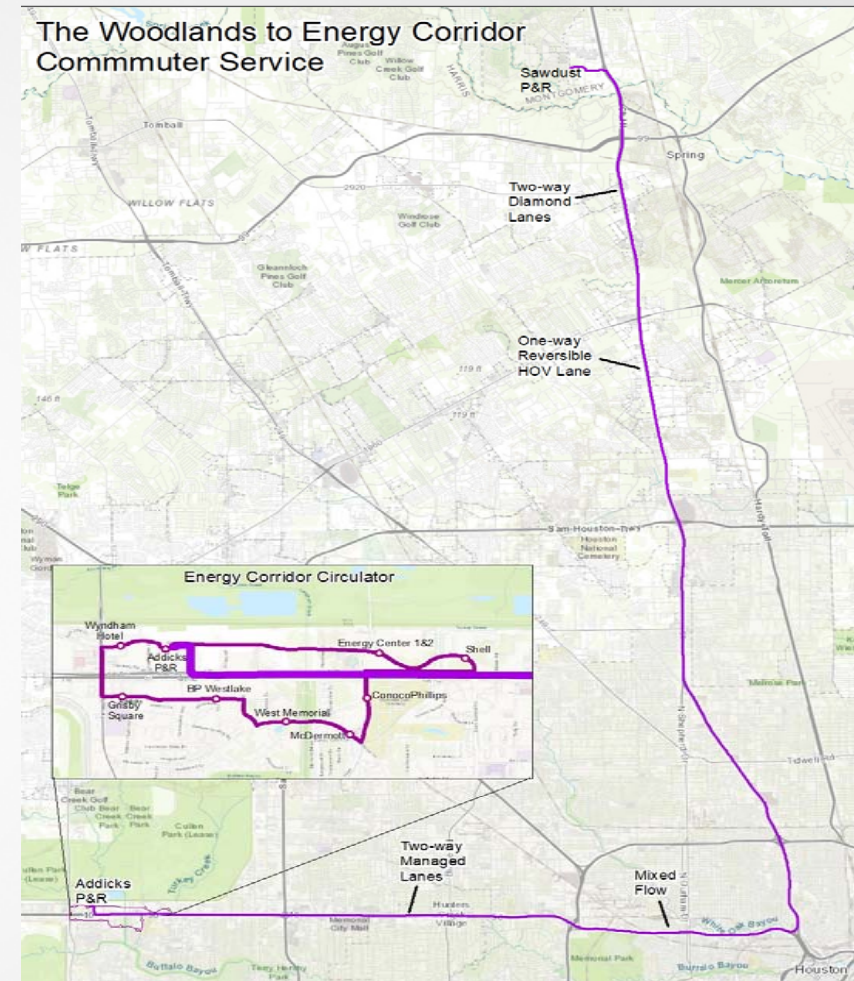
# Existing Woodlands Express Coach



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# The Woodlands – July 2019

- Actually longer route than Conroe with Energy Corridor Circulator (55 miles)
- Route chosen to stay out of mixed traffic and minimize travel time.



## # 3 – Pearland Park and Ride

- 20 plus years struggle of establishing commuter service in rapidly growing suburban city
- Need for commuter service is undisputed
- Financial issues have been challenging
- Pearland/Kerrville Bus originally applied for CMAQ grant
- Later decided to implement without federal participation

# Can This Really Work?

- Pearland is close to the Texas Medical Center and Downtown
- Daily parking rates are very high at both destinations
- Toll lanes on TX-288 are being added
- Demand for service is very high according to multiple studies
- The \$6.50 one-way fare may yield a positive return on equity

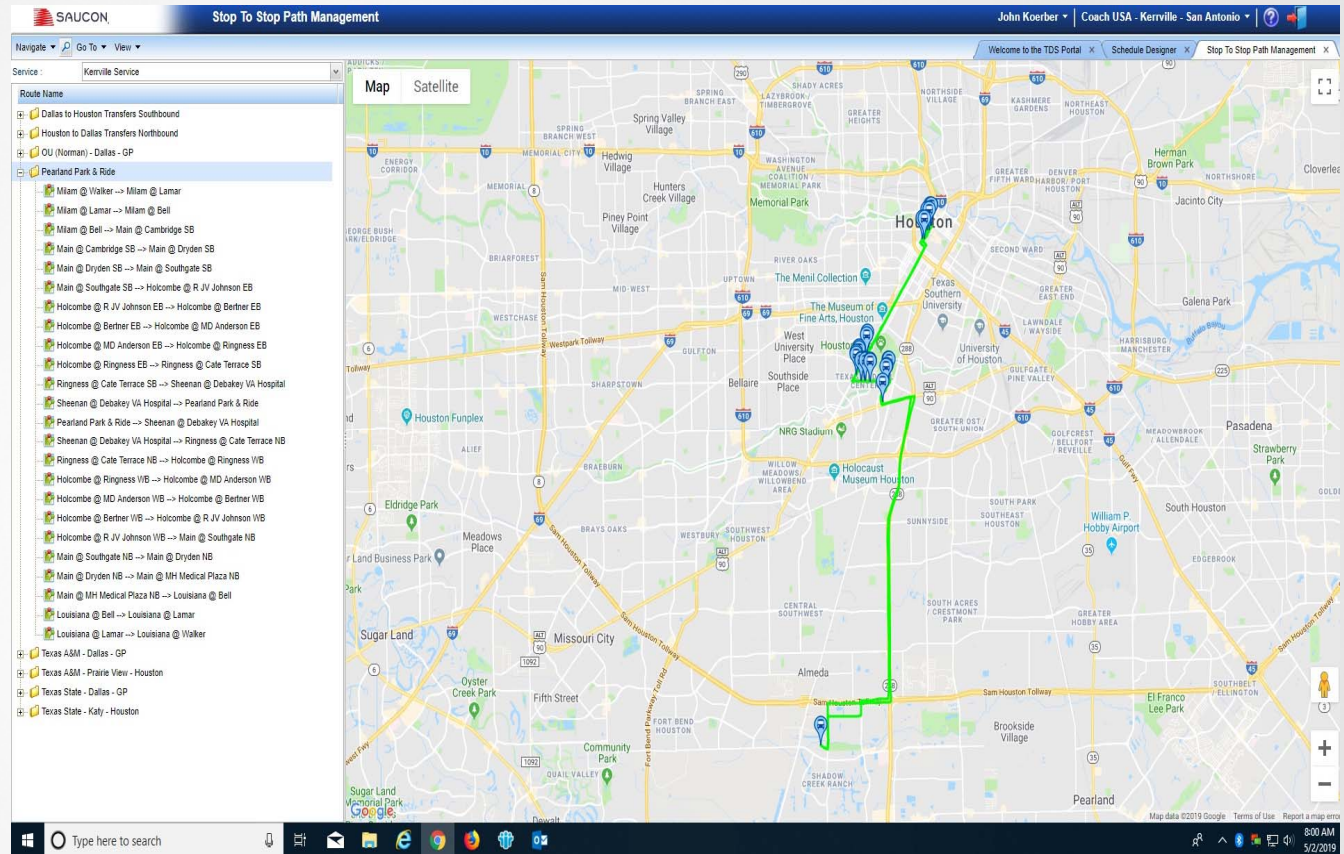
# Kerrville Coach Bus



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# Pearland – July 8, 2019

- Destination in Texas Medical Center and Downtown Houston shown
- Can a convergence of factors result in a profitable venture?



# #4 - Fort Bend Transit Commuter Service

- Fort Bend County is the largest suburban county (750K) in the region
- No current service to Downtown Houston
- Service start awaiting completion of new transit facility and receipt of new vehicles
- Likely implementation is early 2020

# Existing Fort Bend Commuter Bus

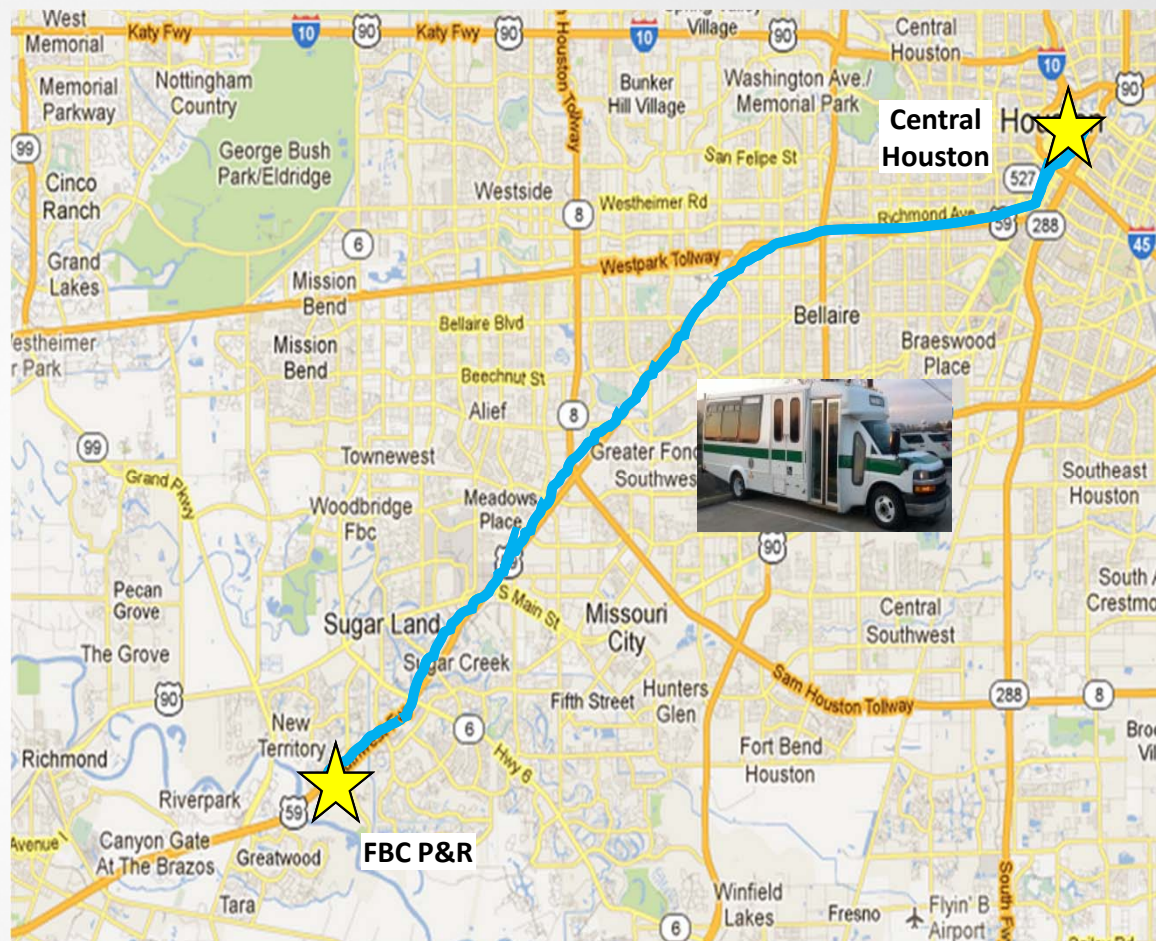


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# Fort Bend – Early 2020

- Fort Bend Service may start even in late 2019 from University of Houston – Sugar Land to Downtown Houston
- Strong demand from largest suburban county to Downtown Houston



# Next Steps in Commuter Transit

- Working with Springwoods Village – Exxon Mobil consolidated campus
- Commuter transit services in: Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller Counties
- Expansion of Recent Services
- More outreach

# Questions?

Alan Rodenstein

H-GAC

Houston, TX

713-993-2407

[alan.rodenstein@h-gac.com](mailto:alan.rodenstein@h-gac.com)