

**Appendix 16**  
**Public Comment Process**

## Legal Notice -- 2<sup>nd</sup> D R A F T

### HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL Public Comment Period and Public Meetings on the Draft 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update and Conformity Finding

H-GAC is announcing the opening of a 30-day public comment period to give the public an opportunity to provide comments on the Draft 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update and its new air quality conformity finding for revisions to the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program and the *2035 Regional Transportation Plan*. The 30-day public comment period starts on Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup> and will end on Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. Public meetings will be held at the following locations:

#### **Thursday, October 7, 2010**

**6:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

Montgomery County Commissioners Courtroom  
501 N. Thompson  
Conroe, TX 77301

#### **Tuesday, October 12, 2010**

**5:30 – 7:00 p.m.**

Houston-Galveston Area Council  
3555 Timmons Lane  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Conference Room A  
Houston, TX 77027

- Draft 2035 RTP Update: [www.2035plan.org](http://www.2035plan.org)
- Air quality conformity documentation:  
[www.h-gac.com/taq/airquality\\_model/conformity/2010/default.aspx](http://www.h-gac.com/taq/airquality_model/conformity/2010/default.aspx).

All written comments may be submitted to Transportation Public Information, Houston-Galveston Area Council, P.O. Box 22777, Houston, Texas 77227-2777, emailed to [publiccomments@h-gac.com](mailto:publiccomments@h-gac.com), or faxed to (713) 993-4508. For more information, please visit: [www.2035plan.org](http://www.2035plan.org).

*The transit providers in the Houston-Galveston region are the Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO), Harris County CSD Transit Services, Fort Bend County Public Transportation, Brazoria County Transit Services, Connect Transit, Island Transit, Colorado Valley Transit District, and The District. This public notice and public comment period will satisfy the federal public notice requirements for each of the transit providers regarding its transit program of projects for fiscal years 2011-2014. The proposed program of projects, unless amended, will meet the requirements regarding the final program of projects. Upon amendment, H-GAC will make available a final publication of the program of projects.*

*In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, H-GAC will provide for reasonable accommodations for person attending H-GAC functions. Requests from persons needing special accommodations should be received by H-GAC staff 24 hours prior to a function. The public*

*meeting will be conducted in English, and requests for language interpreters or other special communication needs should be made at least two working days prior to a function. Please call 713-993-4557 for assistance*

**2035 RTP Update and Air Quality Conformity Public Meeting  
3555 Timmons Lane, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room A  
5:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 12, 2010**

The following presentation was provided by Pat Waskowiak, Transportation Program Manager.

My name is Pat Waskowiak and I work for the Houston-Galveston Area Council. I am a Program Manager for Transportation Planning and Programming. We are here tonight to talk about the RTP, particularly the 2035 RTP Update. Let me give you a little background on the Plan. H-GAC's Transportation Policy Council adopted the 2035 RTP back in 2007. The RTP looks out 20+ years and in this case, the horizon year is 2035. It covers and an 8-county area--Harris and the 7 surrounding counties. It is a multi-modal transportation plan and includes roadway improvements, transit improvements, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and programs like vanpool service and other programs designed to help improve air quality in the region. The RTP is a federally mandated plan, and regions over 50,000 populations must have a transportation plan in place.

We update the plan periodically and the original 2035 RTP was adopted back in 2007. We were not anticipating doing an update to the plan but we had to do it as a result of several changes, largely in the funding projections for transportation for the region. That is what I need to talk to you about tonight, the process we have been using to update the plan and the cost of that update.

I just want to let you know that we are already working on the next plan, which is the 2040 RTP. This update will feed into that next plan. It is part of a continuous process we are engaged in all the time here at H-GAC.

**Slide Presentation:**

This slide gives you a little bit of information about why we are updating the RTP. The forecast for transportation funding we developed back in 2007 for the 2035 RTP is shown in the top line. At that time we were projecting for the life of the plan about \$157 billion in revenue and expenditures for the plan. Since that time, the funding forecasts both for the state and for the region have been dramatically revised. Basically, we are looking at about half of the anticipated funding that we did back in 2007. There is a little bit of an increase early on in 2010-2012 due to some unanticipated funding sources. Back in 2007, we did not know about this when we did the plan forecast. This was based on Proposition 12 and Proposition 14 bonds that were approved by the Legislature and State issued bonds. You can see that revenue reflected in the blue line early on. Once we received the revenue, we returned to a steady state and even a decrease in anticipated revenues over time. This is largely coming from State and Federal

sources. We received revenues based on motor fuel taxes collected on local, State and Federal levels, and the blue line indicates the decline in the anticipated revenue coming from those two sources in our return for the motor fuels tax.

For this update, we are basing that information on TxDOT's revised revenue forecast. For the update, we are showing reductions and State and Federal expenditures on the State-maintained system, roadway and transit systems; but otherwise, we are trying to keep the plan unchanged. We have not revisited revenue forecasts for our local government, cities, counties, and transit providers in the region other than to the degree they receive Federal and State funding through TxDOT. So those remain unchanged, but we will be revisiting them for the 2040 RTP Update. For this particular update, we just did not have the opportunity to do that. The one we do know about today is TxDOT's financial forecast so we are trying to reflect that in the forecast. So you can see this financial forecast is very different than the one we anticipated back in 2007.

So what does that mean? For the update, the horizon year remains the same, the goals and objectives of the plan are the same, and we used the same demographic forecast developed back in 2007. The thing that has changed is the financial forecast and its resulting program of projects for the plan. This is also triggering a new air quality assessment for our region. We have updated information based on comments received from the State and Local governments, and we've placed projects in the appropriate years for the air quality analysis based on anticipated implementation. We also have to do that for the financial plan because the plan must show cost in year of expenditure dollars. It also has to show total project costs. **We've been doing those calculations for the last couple of months, and we've finalized our financial information and completed the air quality conformity assessment. The assessment is based on anticipation of emissions going up or down based on the program of projects in the plan. The emissions we look at are emissions of precursors for ozone, VOC, and NOx. Dr. Graciela Lubertino is our air quality conformity specialist, and she is here to answer any questions about that.**

This slide is the financial summary which shows revenues compared to expenditures. In this region, we have always received the majority of our revenue from local sources. So in the 2035 RTP, more than 60 percent of all revenue came from counties and municipalities from local governments. In this RTP Update, we are seeing that percentage grow. It is now closer to 75 percent of all revenue coming from local sources which include toll revenues, the 1 percent sales tax collected by Houston METRO, and general revenues that local governments use to fund transportation projects. What is important is the Federal and State percentages as the slice of the pie is becoming smaller. We see that reflected on the expenditure side where transit takes up a significant share. Our toll road projects are expected to increase, and the expenditure portion on the State and Federal side is smaller than it has been in previous plans, and that is a trend that we expect to see continue.

**This slide shows the air quality conformity results. We have to look at emissions reductions in different years which we call milestone years (at the bottom of the slide). We have to compare emissions for VOC and NOx to budgets set by the State. You can see that with that analysis, we are under the budget for precursors for ozone in the milestone years. We were a little bit nervous about**

**this plan because we were not sure what the emissions impacts would be, but with the budgets that we have today, we are able to meet the air quality conformity requirements.**

One of the results of this is that vehicle miles of travel as shown continue to increase over time as shown in this slide. The results of that is that when a reduced program of projects we are seeing vehicles hours traveled-- if you look at it by speed range—the green bar which represents the 2035 RTP Update gets a lot bigger at much slower speeds. So what does that mean? It means that we are going to be spending more time sitting in our vehicles stuck in traffic.

Those are the unhappy results of vehicle miles of travel in the plan, but it is what we have based on the anticipated revenue. We are now in the public comment period of the plan. We have been speaking to different groups about the funding situation and the resulting program of projects. The project lists on the table show exactly what is in the plan for that time period. We have been talking to different groups about the project list and the funding situation and attempting to solicit comments, but it is more of an educational opportunity to try to let our residents and policy makers understand the funding scenario as we see it as it has been projected by the State and have an opportunity to understand what that might mean in their communities.

We anticipate that our Transportation Policy Council will adopt the 2035 RTP Update at its October 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, **we will submit the air quality conformity finding and a copy of the plan to our State and Federal partners for review, and hopefully they will give their approval for that sometime before the end of the year.** We will then have a new plan in place which will also be the starting point for our next 2040 plan. In the meantime, we will continue to talk about the funding situation and continue to work on the 2040 Plan development.

There is a place on our website we are encouraging people to go to make comments. All the Plan documents and information about the plan are on the website, maps by county, financial tables, and an Executive Summary which goes into a little more detail than we covered today. If you have the time, take one of these project lists and let us know if you need more information.

Are there any questions? (short Q & A follows)

**There were no public comments.**