

8. DRAFT 2026 UNIFIED TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (UTP) COMMENTS

BACKGROUND

The Unified Transportation Program (UTP) is used by the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) to plan and guide project development over a 10-year period. The UTP is developed annually by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to comply with the Texas Administrative Code (TAC §16.105) and is approved by the TTC every August. The UTP authorizes TxDOT and local partnering agencies to prepare projects for construction based on potential future cash flow.

CURRENT SITUATION

The UTP identifies anticipated funding levels for FY 2026 to FY 2035. Allocations are listed in the UTP for the 12 TxDOT funding categories listed below.

- Category 1: Preventative Maintenance
- Category 2: Metropolitan and Urban Area Corridor Projects
- Category 3: Non-Traditionally Funded Transportation Projects
- Category 4: Statewide Connectivity Corridor Projects
- Category 5: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement
- Category 6: Structures Replacement and Rehabilitation (Bridge)
- Category 7: Metropolitan Mobility and Rehabilitation (Surface Transportation Block Grant)
- Category 8: Safety
- Category 9: Transportation Alternatives
- Category 10 Supplemental Transportation Programs
- Category 11: District Discretionary
- Category 12: Strategic Priority

In June 2025, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) released the draft 2026 UTP for public review and comment. After reviewing the document, H-GAC staff submitted a comment letter with three comments on the draft 2026 UTP. The comment letter submitted by staff is attached for your information.

Staff continue to review the draft document and meet with TxDOT staff to analyze potential financial impact of any changes in federal allocations and to ensure consistency with the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), 10-Year Plan, and the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). However, the staff's analysis will only detail categories that the Transportation Policy Council (TPC) has selection authority, including Categories 2, 5, 7, and 9.

Additional information on the UTP and the funding categories is available at the following website: [Unified Transportation Program - UTP \(txdot.gov\)](https://www.txdot.gov/unified-transportation-program-utp)

ACTION REQUESTED

Information only.



HOUSTON- GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

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July 28, 2025
Mr. Marc Williams
Executive Director
Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th St.
Austin, TX 78701

Subject: Comments on Draft 2026 Unified Transportation Program (UTP)

Dear Mr. Williams,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft 2026 Unified Transportation Program (UTP). After reviewing the draft 2026 UTP, we would like to provide the following comments for consideration on behalf of the Houston-Galveston Area Council Metropolitan Planning Organization (H-GAC MPO):

- New Category 2: Metropolitan and Urban Area Corridor Projects and Category 5: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Funding

The H-GAC MPO has observed that several projects in the draft 2026 UTP include newly allocated Category 2 and Category 5 funds. However, these authorizations were not reviewed or approved by the H-GAC MPO Policy Board, the Transportation Policy Council (TPC). As stated under the Project Selection Guidelines within the UTP Funding Category Descriptions, H-GAC's TPC has the authority to select projects funded with both Category 2 and Category 5 funds allocated to the H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

The H-GAC MPO requests that TxDOT consider removing the new Category 2 and Category 5 funding allocations from the final version of the 2026 UTP that will be presented at the Texas Transportation Commission meeting in August 2025.

- Incremental Reduction in Category 5: CMAQ Funding

We are concerned about planned reductions in Category 5 funding allocation, particularly the proposed reductions beginning in FY 2029 through 2035 to 50% of current levels. As a non-attainment area, Category 5 funding is vital to achieving and maintaining compliance with federal air quality standards. The proposed reduction will limit our ability to address our region's air quality issues and to implement projects that address congestion mitigation and improve air quality.



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We ask that TxDOT reconsider its proposed reductions to Category 5 funding and distribution to the non-attainment areas. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you toward strategies that support the goal of utilizing federal funding more quickly while maintaining the ability of H-GAC to achieve air quality standards through its investment portfolio.

➤ Exclusion of Projects Listed in the 2025 UTP

We note the absence of five regional mobility projects located on SH 332, FM 2920, US 290, and IH 10 that were included in the 2025 UTP. These regionally significant projects are essential to meeting mobility needs of our region. Deprogramming these projects will have a significant impact on driver safety and overall efficiency of the regional on-system highway network.

We recommend that TxDOT consider reprogramming these major highway projects to support our regional safety and mobility objectives.

TxDOT's continued cooperation and coordination with H-GAC throughout the UTP development process is a priority for the H-GAC MPO. These comments will be communicated with TxDOT Houston and Beaumont District Engineers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft 2026 UTP. Please contact us with any questions or additional information.

Sincerely,

Ron Papsdorf
Chief Transportation Officer
Houston-Galveston Area Council
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120
Houston, TX. 77027

CC:

Humberto Gonzalez Jr., P.E., Transportation Planning and Programming Division,
Director, TxDOT
Glenn Allbritton, P.E., District Engineer, TxDOT Houston District
Martin Gonzalez, P.E., District Engineer, TxDOT Beaumont District

Signature: Ron Papsdorf
Ron Papsdorf (Jul 28, 2025 14:44:56 CDT)

Email: papsdorf@h-gac.com