

5A. SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES

**LONG RANGE PLANNING**

1. Sub-regional Planning Initiatives (SPI)

- Chambers County Thoroughfare Plan study began July 1, 2023. The study team has updated the Thoroughfare Plan based on comments received January 30, 2024, Steering Committee meeting. The updated draft Thoroughfare Plan will be presented to the Stakeholders on April 18, 2024.
- Washington Avenue Corridor study began October 1, 2023. The study kick-off meeting was held in December. The first Steering Committee meeting was held in April 2024.
- Old 6th Ward/TIRZ 13 Mobility study began November 1, 2023. The study team will be having the first public outreach event on April 20, 2024, at **The Deck at Silver Street Studios** from noon – 3pm. The team will be receiving feedback on where the mobility issues are in the study area.
- FM 518 Corridor study began November 1, 2023. The study team held its first public outreach event on April 6, 2024, at the Pearland Spring Fest.
- Pearland Mobility study began November 1, 2023. The study team held its first public outreach event on April 6, 2024, at the Pearland Spring Fest.
- Cemetery Road Corridor Study began March 1, 2024. The first Steering Committee will be May 2024.
- Friendswood's Parkway Corridor study is currently being procured. This project is included in the 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and is scheduled to begin in the Summer of 2024.

2. Freight Planning

- The Greater Houston Freight Committee (GHFC) meeting was held on February 28, 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for April 18, 2024.
- The 2023 Regional Goods Movement Plan (RGMP) has ended. The next step is for the plan to be adopted by TPC at the April 26, 2024 meeting. For more information visit: [www.engage.h-gac.com](http://www.engage.h-gac.com)
- The Houston Area Rail Transformation (HART) was presented to TAC and TPC in December of 2022 as a working group formed to coordinate and prioritize regional freight infrastructure to seek grant funding opportunities. The Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) formalized the working group as a GCRD committee on January 17, 2023. Two groups have been developed as working groups of HART.
- The Grants Group was developed in June 2023 to assess the readiness of regional partners for upcoming grant submittals and provide letters of support to demonstrate regional support for projects. From July 2023 to December 2023, the priority list representing the regional issues seen at grade crossings was submitted to TxDOT for inclusion into their Phase 2 Rail Study.
- The Unfunded Needs Group was developed in September 2023 to identify unfunded regional needs and align the region for future Rail Relocation Funds. From September 2023 to February 2024, the unfunded needs group began discussing the methodology and criteria needed to begin the assessment.

- The HART working group meets monthly following TPC. H-GAC staff continues to provide meeting support and regional coordination. The next meeting is planned for March 22, 2024.

### 3. Regional Incident Management, Safety, and Operations

- H-GAC staff conducted a Tow and Go Operations meeting with the Harris County Sheriff Office (HCSO), Houston Police Department (HPD), AECOM, TxDOT, and the Towing industry at Houston TranStar.
- H-GAC staff conducted a Traffic Incident Management meeting at Houston TranStar. The meeting had representatives from TxDOT, HCSO, HPD, AECOM, Hazmat, SH288 and the Towing Industry.
- The Tow and Go Public Awareness Campaign is live with educational information streaming on radio, through digital and social media, and billboards across the region.
- H-GAC Staff is working on a Hurricane Preparedness and Awareness Campaign for 2024.
- H-GAC staff attended multiple jurisdiction meetings to confirm there are no changes to the hurricane evacuation routes and zip zones.
- H-GAC staff conducted two meetings with consultant on regional ITS Architecture project. They will present to TSMO Subcommittee in May.
- "Tow and Go" performed 3,011 "No Cost Tows" in March 2024. March's average clearance time was 15 minutes and 44 seconds.

### 4. Environmental Planning

- Staff are updating the land use\landcover base map of the Eco-Logical tool based on recent aerial photography. Further enhancement of the tool will include links to existing environmental assessment and final environmental impact statements for roadway projects within the planning H-GAC region. Staff will coordinate with TxDOT and consultants working on local Planning and Environmental Linkages studies to examine the application of Ecological tools on those studies.
- Staff continue to follow local Environmental Justice news as they relate to the H-GAC Title VI Nondiscrimination Program and will inform the triennial update to the regional Title VI Program Update and report on activities in furtherance of Environmental Justice.

### 5. Resiliency Planning

- H-GAC's MPO was one of the 80 recipients that will receive funding from the PROTECT Discretionary Grant Program. The program awarded \$829.6 million in grant funding to fund projects to improve the resilience of the surface transportation system.

H-GAC will receive \$1.1 million to develop a Regional Resilience Improvement Plan for the surface transportation system of an eight-county region that experiences repeated extreme weather events, natural disasters, and hazardous flooding conditions. The project will fine-tune previously developed strategies, identify gaps in planning, create a list of priority improvements that can be implemented in the short- and long term, and include a risk-based assessment of vulnerabilities to roadways, culverts, ditches, medians, and other transportation assets.

- Staff coordinated letters of support for regional partners PROTECT Grant Program applications.
- Staff completed work on the Resilience & Durability Pilot project as part of the FHWA program to develop transportation-specific resiliency best practices and strategies. The draft report has been finalized and accepted by FHWA. Staff has completed an update of the Foresight Panel on Environmental Effects report with outcomes from the Pilot project. For more information visit: [www/h-gac.com/resiliency-planning](http://www/h-gac.com/resiliency-planning)

#### 6. Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) subcommittee provides guidance and oversees the progress of the RTP. The committee must meet quorum and meetings are held every second Wednesday of the month. The next meeting is May 8, 2024.
- The 2045 RTP Update was approved by TPC in April 2023. The final report and 33 associated appendixes are available online: <https://engage.h-gac.com/2045rtupdate>
- Staff has finalized the RTP Project Development Process online portal and is in the final stages of internal approval.
- The project sponsor workshop for the RTP Project Development Process is coming together and a date will be selected soon. Once selected, staff will notify our local partners of the date, time, and location of the project workshop.
  - The purpose of the project workshop is to: present the RTP Project Development Process, reveal the online portal, and provide presentations on data applications that can be used to submit a successful project application to the RTP.

#### 7. Other Planning Activities

- Staff continued to monitor regional travel impacts of COVID-19. Regional travel volumes were monitored through StreetLight data. Transit ridership numbers are now reported quarterly from transit agencies in the region. Permanent pedestrian/bicyclist counters provide updates on counts along regional pedestrian/bicyclist facilities. Staff have developed an online [COVID-19 Regional Traffic Impacts App](#) which displays vehicular, active, and transit transportation patterns during the Pandemic.
- Work is ongoing towards the update of the Language Access Plan (LAP). The Language Access Plan identifies the language needs in the minority population and specifies policies and strategies the agency will employ to enable individuals who do not speak English proficiently to enjoy meaningful participation in agency programs and activities. Efforts to update the LAP includes a survey to gather information about regional language use and factors that impact the level of public involvement in agency activities. Other related activities include the community roundtables which are aimed at opening a dialogue with advocates, representatives, and members of the different racial and ethnic minority groups and other underserved populations in the greater Houston metropolitan region, to help H-GAC understand how best to engage with these communities and encourage their participation in the civic planning decision-making that affect their lives, health, and environment. Information gathered will assist the update to the Language Access Plan (LAP) and the triennial update to the H-GAC Title VI Plan. The community

roundtable events will commence in February with meetings with the Korean Community and Chinese Communities. The roundtables will continue through March 2024.

- Staff are beginning the planning process for a February 2024 webinar event commemorating the anniversaries of the passage of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The webinar is presented under the Title VI and Environmental Justice Awareness Initiative with a goal to event will educate staff and stakeholders on vital Title VI/Equity issues relevant to MPOs, municipalities, and other recipients of federal financial assistance.

## SHORT RANGE PLANNING

### 1. Project Programming

- Staff coordinated the amendments to the 2023-2026 TIP document. Staff coordinated with TxDOT and local governments on the proposed amendments to the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.
- Staff met with local sponsors as part of the quarterly TIP monitoring efforts.
- Staff worked on the development of project selection criteria for the next Call for Projects and coordinated with various subcommittees.
- Staff completed the project selection process for the Carryover Balance projects. These are projects that can be ready for implementation within the next 2 years. The effort included the selection of over \$335 M in surface transportation projects identified for project development activities and construction. Over the spring, staff will work to program these projects into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.
- Staff completed and the TPC approved projects for the Regional Goods Movement investment criteria. Over \$150M in regional projects that encourage the safe and efficient movement of goods in the region. These projects will be submitted into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program in the Spring of 2024.

### 2. Pedestrian and Bicyclist Planning

- Staff are continuing to work with the Data Analytics department to update the Regional Bike Network Map. Larger communities that have submitted their data are now live on the Regional Bike Network map. Staff have started the process of updating the Sidewalk data layer.
- The consultant selection process for the Connecting Buffalo Bayou East Design Concept study continues with execution of consultant contract and ILA by April 2024.
- The Memorial Drive RFP proposal evaluation process ended by the end of April.
- City of Friendswood Trails Master Plan solicitation is set to be live May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The Bay Area Ped Bike study is ongoing. A project task force meeting took place April 25<sup>th</sup>. Development of recommendations is ongoing.
- Staff attended various meetings such as the City of Houston Bicycle Advisory Committees, Texas Pedestrian Coalition, Houston Safety Task Force, etc.
- Staff worked with Procurement to publish a request for proposal for counter installation work, which closed on January 11<sup>th</sup>. Staff confirmed that mobile counter activities are also eligible for

inclusion in the contract. Staff are working to confirm if the budget for this expanded contract may necessitate board of directors approval.

### 3. Transit Planning

- The next meeting of the Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee will be held on Thursday, July 11, 2024.
- The US 90A Corridor Transit Study began in March, with a project kick-off meeting held on March 12, 2024. Project management and data collection activities are currently underway, and the Steering Committee is expected to meet in late May.
- Staff is developing the Regional Bus Study, which will examine the feasibility of bus services connecting outlying communities to each other as well as the urban core. This AFA-funded study could be supplemented by an additional TxDOT grant to cover the entire 13-county H-GAC service area, which is recommended by the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan.
- The Pearland Transit Study Alternatives Analysis draft was completed, and preparation of the Draft Final Report is underway. We are extending our review of alternatives to examine additional options for delivering transit service based on feedback from the City of Pearland. Presentations to the Pearland City Council, TAC, and TPC are scheduled for July.
- The Board of Directors approved two years of funding for Microtransit pilot service in the City of Sugar Land. Preparation of the interlocal contract has begun. Service is expected to begin in the Fall. The contract is moving through the internal approval process.
- CMAQ Commuter pilot service provided by Fort Bend Transit began on March 4 with initial ridership numbers exceeding expectations. Monthly commuter ridership exceeded 3,300 in March 2024. Service with the Woodlands township was adjusted to allow the expense of administrative costs.
- The Dayton Transit Study contract is in Internal Audit. The study is expected to begin mid-year.
- Staff are working with METRO and regional transit partners to continue implementation of the Regional Transit Connectivity Project. Harris County Transit and Fort Bend Transit have gone live with Mobile Ticketing under the new partnership project. H-GAC and METRO are currently working to integrate all partners into the Regional Data Management System.
- The Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee approved a new methodology for the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan's Transit Need Index in January 2024. Staff are working with the region's transit agencies to gather necessary data to implement this methodology.
- Data collection for Transit Asset Management performance measures is complete. Staff have contacted all agencies & have updated plans from all agencies. Staff began presenting the results to internal subcommittees in February. Staff presented to TAC & TPC for information in March. Staff will present to TAC for recommendation of FY 2026 targets & to TPC for approval of these targets in April.
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### TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC OUTREACH

- A Provider Summit for providers of Paratransit and Non-Emergency Medical Transportation services will be held on June 25, 2024, at H-GAC offices, from 11 AM to 2 PM. The event will

include small group discussions, a networking hour, and a panel discussion. A host committee has been formed and met, and development of activities and marketing materials is underway.

- Planning for the following projects is currently underway or were completed recently:
  - RTP Project Submission Process
  - Hurricane Preparedness Campaign
  - Safe Streets 4 All
  - EJ/Title VI – Awareness Initiative (Connecting Communities)
  - Language Access Plan Update
  - Washington Ave Corridor Study
  - Tow & Go – Media Buying
  - Commute Solutions (Connect Smart Pilot Program)
  - Pearland Public Meetings – Phase II
  - Chambers County Thoroughfare Plan
  - Bay Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan
  - Friendswood Parkway Corridor Study
  - Cemetery Road Corridor Study
  - US 90A Transit Corridor Study
  - Old Sixth Ward/TIRZ 13 Mobility Study Corridor Study
  - MPO 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Air Quality – Climate Change Engagement for MPO's Collar Counties
  - Best Workplaces for Commuters

#### COMMUTE SOLUTIONS

- Commute Solutions continues to work with the H-GAC Data & Analytics Research team and the Air Quality teams in planning efforts for Ozone Action Month.
- Commute Solutions completed the draft RFP for Emergency Ride Home.
- Staff attended or deployed ConnectSmart to attend a number of Earth Month events throughout the area
- Commute Solutions and Houston ConnectSmart participated in the soft launch of the ConnectSmart program on the campus of Rice University. The launch event took place during the campus' Earth Month kickoff event.
- Commute Solutions and the TDM team hosted a quarterly Regional TDM Workgroup meeting. The collective of agencies provided updates regarding air quality initiatives, planning, Emergency Ride Home, and Ozone Action. The meeting also included presentations by Allison Velleca of AECOM regarding the evaluation and recommendations for the program and TDM best practices were presented by Larry Filler of CT Rides. The group will have its next meeting in July and continue to discuss goals and collaborative opportunities.
- Commute Solutions launched a pilot campaign and related toolkit to assist employers with launching the ConnectSmart app. The campaign's launch events provided a platform for transit partners to promote services to Greenway Plaza. The campaign will continue through May and will include regular communication and promotion plus incentives.
- AECOM, the contractor executing the evaluation and recommendations for Commute Solutions, continued with the project plan by submitting the initial draft of the recommendations for the program.
- Commute Solutions continued work toward promoting the Bike the Gulf campaign during Bike Month

## CLEAN VEHICLES PROGRAMS PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- Staff continue to work on a project to reassess the availability of Buy America compliant vehicles suitable for inclusion as part of the Clean Vehicles Program. Staff are continuing to work to reach out to manufacturers of vehicles and related charging equipment to discuss Buy America requirements and the availability of compliant equipment. Staff are also working with in-house council to understand available options and to review recent revisions to federal Buy America rules and understand how agency programs can best comply. This work is ongoing.
- Staff worked with grant recipients who have recently received vehicle deliveries to support ongoing grant activities, undertake the vehicle acceptance and invoice process, and processing invoice materials.
- Staff continued to monitor post-delivery projects that have not yet met the contractually required emission reductions based upon subrecipient performance. This monitoring effort ensures that grant recipients' usage of vehicles remains within grant requirements and that vehicle use and mileage commitments are met. Historically, this monitoring effort has occurred through a mix of subrecipient self-reporting and automated GPS monitoring.
- Staff continued to process contract closeouts for projects meeting minimum contracted requirements for all project vehicles and is working to complete this closeout process when possible. In the last month, staff processed and released seven vehicle replacement contracts as well as one vehicle title for project partners that had successfully completed their grant and/or loan requirements .

## GENERAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- H-GAC continues to administer \$1 million in planning funds through the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG). Staff have completed the contract signature process on all project partner agreements. The final Priority Climate Action Plan was submitted to EPA on March 1. With that process completed, the team pivoted towards developing materials to be completed in a regional implementation grant application. This application was submitted to EPA on April 1 and included five regional project partners and 13 projects derived from a call for projects process that was undertaken as part of the Priority Climate Action Plan. Activities included in this proposal totaled \$162 million.
- H-GAC continued to work on regional efforts to support the Department of Energy sponsored Houston-Galveston Clean Cities Coalition. Under this program, staff worked with regional fleets to foster economic, environmental, and energy security by working to advance affordable, domestic transportation fuels, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies and practices.
- Staff continues to administer two separate Environmental Protection Agency-funded Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants from the 2018 and 2019 Calls for Projects to deploy all-electric yard tractors at local freight warehouses. Staff have been working with IKEA to replace two existing diesel yard tractors at their Baytown facility with all-electric models.

## TRAVEL DEMAND MODELING & FORECASTING

- Staff continues to provide travel demand and forecasting modeling technical support to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), and other traffic and travel related data developments within the H-GAC MPO region that supports sub-regional and corridor studies for both TxDOT and other H-GAC member agencies projects. These include: support for the Washington Ave ADTs and Design Parameters studies and analysis, TxDOT 36A Project, Cemetery Road study, the US 90A Transit study, Friendswood Parkway Corridor Study, SH 146 Feasibility/Schematic Study that prohibits truck restriction on certain segments of the roadway, the Regional PEL Study, the I-610 South feasibility study, the Tomball Comprehensive Plan and UDC Update, AADT reviews for TxDOT for the 2022 truck percentage review and the 2023 AADT review and an internal request that involved ridership estimation for project selection criteria.
- Staff is almost about to complete with the on-going review, update and processing of the H-GAC traffic count and recount from various traffic data collection within the H-GAC region, **attended** VisionEval user summit and presented HGAC VE model at the summit, worked on the list of files that need to be updated for the new TAZ structure development.
- Staff continues to liaison with TxDOT TP&P and the TTI to determine the best methodologies for the proposed commercial vehicle surveys in the H-GAC MPO region.
- Staff continues to coordinate with the TxDOT TP&P, the ETC Institute and Cambridge Systematics (CS) for the expansion of the Household Survey data collected within H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) region, and continues to coordinate with the TxDOT TP&P on conducting University and Community Colleges Surveys of University of the Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG), and the Galveston College two campuses in Galveston county, continues to review both the executive summary, the general reports and the power-point slide presentation of the Airport Survey, and continues with the amendment of the ETC Airport Survey contract to allow for the development of the optional task #6 (airport sub-model development) of the original scope of work, working with the Procurement team for the Active Transportation Survey for the Bike & Pedestrians data collection within the H-GAC MPO region and the going through the procurement process for the H-GAC traditional 4-step model (TDM) update.
- Staff completed the sensitive testing of the Activity-Based-Model (ABM) model.
- Staff continues to develop Travel Demand Model QA/QC process, supplied 13-county VMT data for the CPRG from TTI, continues to support Transportation's CPRG project, and continues working on new template for conformity process.
- Staff reviewed and compared the 2022 and 2023 NPMRDS INRIX network, lane miles, and VMT at regional and corridor levels, reviewed and analyzed the 2022 and 2023 raw data, calculated travel time reliability measures based on the raw data at regional and corridor levels to quantify the impact of HOV/HOT/Managed lanes, checked existing and after-improvement Travel Time Index for 77 operational improvement projects.