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**Title VI Program Update - 2021  
Public Comments**

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# LIST OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

<i>Comment 1:</i>	<b>Topic: Title VI Program</b>	<i>Submitted by Harrison Humphries Air Alliance</i>
<p>The report identifies that a majority of the EJ populations reside in Houston/Harris, yet they are far underrepresented on the H-GAC's governing bodies, proportionally speaking. It seems the logical conclusion of this report would be to recommend rectifying this imbalance, but there are no detailed recommendations given.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>While H-GAC embraces inclusiveness, the agency does not have the authority to select the members of its governing board or council. The By-Laws of these bodies stipulate that members must be elected officials or ranking executives of public agencies. This limits the range of eligible participants.</p> <p>With regards to the membership of ad-hoc advisory groups and transportation sub-committees, H-GAC joins with other voices to urge member organizations to consider candidates that could add to the diversity of the body when making their nominations.</p>		

<i>Comment 2:</i>	<b>Topic: Title VI Program</b>	<i>Submitted by Harrison Humphries Air Alliance</i>
<p>Similarly, the report identifies that EJ populations would benefit significantly from more transportation investment, but no recommendation is given on how the H-GAC can act on this information. Outside of the relatively broad actions listed in 3.6, will the final draft include more detailed recommendations on how the region can better serve EJ populations?</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>H-GAC will consider this comment when preparing the final draft report.</p>		

<i>Comment 3:</i>	<b>Topic: Title VI Program</b>	<i>Submitted by Harrison Humphries Air Alliance</i>
Section 3.5 states "The cost of the projects that would directly serve the environmental justice neighborhoods amounted to about <b>41.0%</b> of the allocated funding." Could I see the data behind this claim?		
<i>Response:</i>		
The data will be made available as requested.		
The statement referred to relates to information presented in Map 17 (Local Thoroughfare Investments in the H-GAC Ten-Year Plan (2021 – 2030)) which contains projects in the Ten-Year plan that can be assigned to a geographic location. A local thoroughfare project is construed as pertinent to an environmental justice sensitive zone if it is wholly within or intersects an EJ boundary.		

<i>Comment 4:</i>	<b>Topic: Title VI Program</b>	<i>Live Comment by Juan Parras t.e.j.a.s</i>
Good afternoon and thank you for inviting us to join you in a fantastic presentation of what our future is going to look like. We have some concerns regarding Title VI/Environmental Justice communities. One issue we are seriously concerned about is the bike trails that are being built in our community. There are superfund sites and cement crushing facilities and our children are having to take bike rides right through or adjacent to these facilities. I think that needs to be addressed.		
The other issues that we are really concerned about. Of course, you know of all the air toxins in Houston. All the studies that have been conducted regarding Ozone, and the Houston Ship Channel Communities – the front-line communities under non-attainment, and also the Risk Management Plan situation. A lot of information is no longer accessible to the public but a lot of communities, especially frontline communities, are in a very dangerous area when it comes to the industries, if the worst-case scenario occurred.		
Again, I am glad that you invited us to the meeting. I am sorry we haven't been as active as we should have. It looks that the issues our communities are concerned about are starting to be addressed and I am looking forward to participating and continuing to do the work we need to do with poor EJ communities. Thank you for your time.		
<i>The community of concern is the East End almost from the downtown going east all the way to the Manchester community. It includes Eastwood, Second Ward, Magnolia, Harrisburg, Manchester area.</i>		
<i>Response:</i>		
Active Transportation is one of the priority areas in H-GAC's Regional Transportation Plan. The plan identified parts of the region where there is a propensity for bicycling and walking and provide technical assistance for bicycle and pedestrian planning in those communities. The draft Unified Planning Work Program includes a number of bicycle/pedestrian studies that will start within the next two years.		

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Within this framework, the issues identified in the comment can be evaluated through planning and implementation projects. Concerns regarding air quality will be referred to the appropriate programs for their evaluation.

*Comment 5:*

**Topic: Transportation**

*Live Comment by Juan Parras  
t.e.j.a.s*

The other issue that we have in our neighborhood is that we have an excessive number of trains parked in our communities which cut off access for unlimited time – anywhere from 4 to 6 hours, where you have to figure out where the end of the rail line or the train is, so you can cross back into your community.

We also have a lot of traffic of eighteen wheelers that have obviously caused a lot of damage to our streets and also release a lot of diesel to our communities. We need to figure out how to address or create routes for the trucks to get out of our communities, and also to address how the trains are going to not linger in our communities for 5 or 6 hours and sometimes overnight, where we don't have access to get out if there is an emergency. Those are other things I wanted to point out. Thank you.

*Response:*

[See Response to Comment 6 below]

*Comment 6:*

**Topic: Transportation**

*Live Comment by Juan Parras  
t.e.j.a.s*

If I may, I would like to highlight some additional issues. If you think about our community, we have light rail - you know, the rail lines, and we have METRO lines. They run parallel to each other. Where the METRO lines are currently, this may also be happening in another community, but in our community, we cannot make a left or right turn on too many of those streets. You just can't make a left or right because of METRO.

So, if you are blocked – you can't go left or right, and you can't go the other way because the light rail is blocking you. You are enclosed. You are locked in. So those are issues that I think somebody needs to come down here. We would be glad to show you visually some of the concerns that we have. Unless you live here ... your experience is a lot of times, you are just locked in, and you can't turn on METRO lines, left or right because they've closed lanes up.

*Response:*

H-GAC can arrange a site visit to understand more of the problems in those areas – if we can contact you.

[Parras: Certainly ...Thank you]

<i>Comment 7:</i>	<b>Topic: Title VI Program</b>	<i>Live Comment by Nalleli Hidalgo t.e.j.a.s</i>
<p>I work with t.e.j.a.s. (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services) as an education liaison. I primarily work with youth in the Houston region, specifically for high school. My question would be around outreach. What are the plans in terms of engaging community members that might not know about these efforts? How do you plan to do that outreach to those people who are affected by the trains but would also benefit a lot by lines such as the METRO line system?</p>		
<p><i>Response:</i></p>		
<p>Public outreach is a integral part of the transportation planning process. Planning Studies conducted by the H-GAC's Metropolian Planning Organization include public participation plans tailored to communities within study area. Following these plans, staff is able to provide information and gather input at the neighborhood level using various communication tools. Because of the Covid-19 problem, much of our outreach effort utilizes virtual participation at this time.</p> <p>H-GAC is continuously seeking opportunities to expand outreach efforts. One way to further our public participation is through community contacts. Staff can include you on our mailing list, if that is acceptable. H-GAC can share information on on-going planning efforts and invite you to meetings. Please share more information about your community issues, or contacts of any interested citizens.</p>		