

public
participation
plan



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

*A Guide for Public Involvement in the Metropolitan Transportation Planning
and Programming Process*

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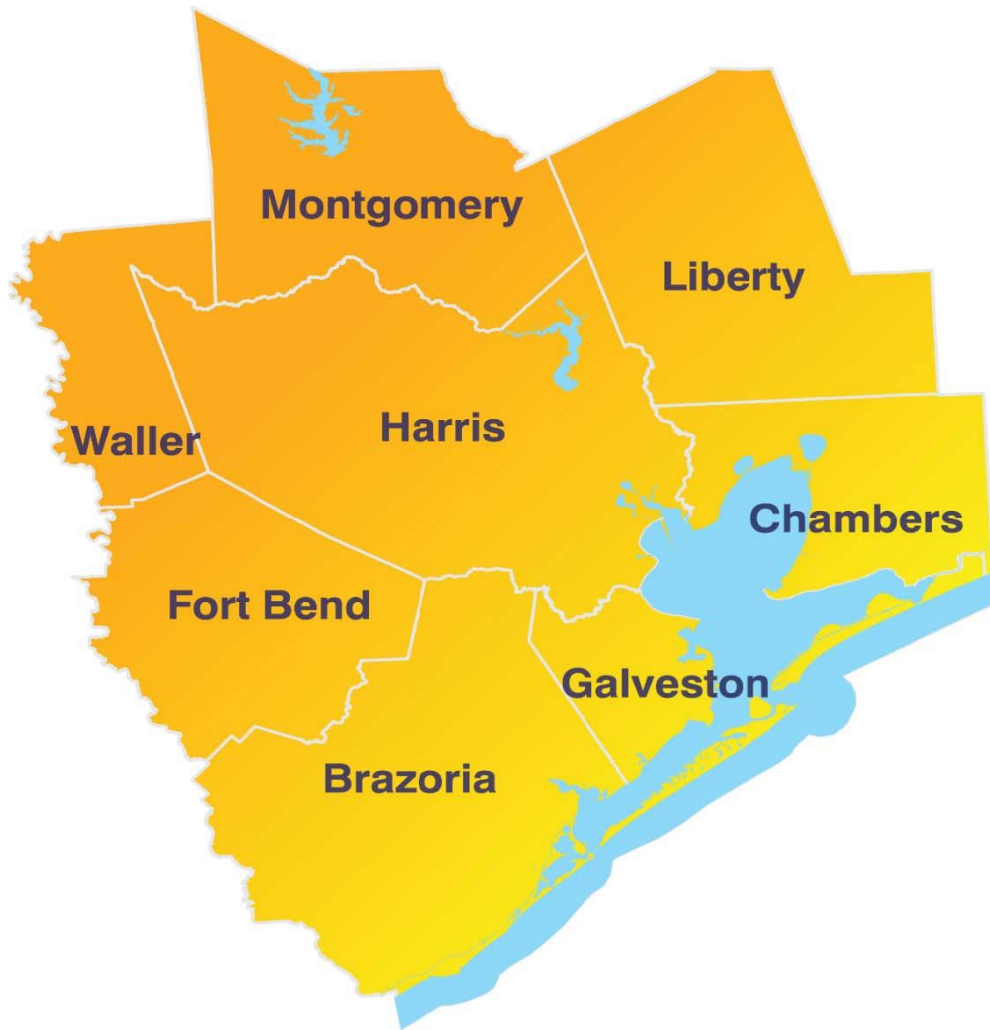
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SECTION 1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Introduction

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is a voluntary organization of local governments that consists of a 13-county service area and is governed by a Board of Directors. H-GAC also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the eight-county region that includes Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller Counties.

Eight-County Houston-Galveston Region



Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

H-GAC developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP) to ensure an open planning process that supports early and continued public involvement, timely public notice, and full public access to information regarding key transportation decisions. The PPP serves as a guide for H-GAC's transportation public involvement process. It is part of a regional effort to ensure a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated process among stakeholders to provide opportunities for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional transportation plans and programs.

The PPP provides the public with an understanding of the transportation planning process and the core functions of the MPO. Along with developing the PPP, the core functions of the MPO include developing the long-range plan known as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan, and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The RTP provides a responsible guide for maintaining and improving the current transportation system and identifies priority transportation investments. The TIP is a fiscally constrained financial plan of transportation projects approved to receive federal funding over the next four-years. The UPWP outlines the proposed tasks and estimated costs associated with conducting the region's transportation planning and research for the next two years. Planning activities for the UPWP are described in **Appendix A** of this plan.

The intent of the PPP is to promote understanding and participation in the regional transportation planning process. There are many opportunities for the public to comment on transportation plans, programs, and projects. H-GAC will use this document to facilitate and encourage the public to become more involved in developing a better transportation system for the region.

The *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) is an annual codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. The outline of this Public Participation Plan adheres to 23 CFR 450.316 – Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

Public Participation Plan Outline

Activity 1: Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities with sufficient time for public review and comment on key decisions, including opportunities to comment on proposed adoption of the RTP and TIP and any necessary amendments:

- Legal notices and other paid advertisements for public meetings are submitted to the *Houston Chronicle* for publication a minimum of 30 days prior to the end of the public comment period for all regional transportation plans and programs. Notices may also be submitted to the *Texas Register*, appropriate local Hispanic, African-American, and Asian publications, and local newspapers in each jurisdiction for all public meetings.
- News releases and media alerts are issued to printers and broadcast media outlets, elected officials, legislators, transit staff, environmental and resident groups, civic organizations, businesses, chambers of commerce, and libraries. In addition, all current publications are posted on the H-GAC transportation website. H-GAC also works with local editors and writers on timely articles regarding current transportation and mobility issues.

- Amendments to the TIP occur throughout the time period between TIP updates. Public meetings and a 30-day public comment period are held prior to the adoption of TIP Amendments and the TIP Update.

Activity 2: Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes; provide opportunities for residents, public agencies, and officials to help shape the region's future through a public comment process that is open and accessible to the public, stakeholders, and policymakers:

- Information workshops are held on topics associated with regional transportation planning. In addition to the bi-monthly Brown Bag Lunch series, these workshops are designed to educate participants about specific topics such as mobility, Intelligent Transportation Systems, freight and safety issues, project submission and implementation, and air quality. Information workshops also provide a means for allowing participants to express their ideas and concerns in an informal setting. Brown Bag Lunch presentations serve as a forum for education in market trends, emerging technologies, and key transportation and planning issues facing the industry. Each bi-monthly speaking engagement gives partner organizations, research institutes, and other industry experts the opportunity to showcase an expert speaker from their firm for a presentation over lunch. Other information workshops are conducted on an as-needed basis.
- By coordinating efforts with stakeholder organizations responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation in the region, including those responsible for economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, and intermodal passenger and freight operations, H-GAC can provide public outreach efforts more effectively and efficiently. This type of coordination includes H-GAC representation at stakeholder meetings and committees and supplying appropriate information regarding H-GAC plans, programs, and current projects. By being active in stakeholder meetings, H-GAC can utilize these opportunities to gain valuable input on transportation activities as well as involvement in discussions regarding transportation needs in the region on a regular basis.

Activity 3: Employ advanced visualization techniques and innovative communication tools to engage the public and stakeholders in the metropolitan transportation planning process:

- H-GAC will evaluate each planning activity and utilize appropriate multimedia communication tools including, but not limited to, websites, social media, videos, webinars, photographs, drawings and/or interactive data analysis and mapping applications.
- The RTP and TIP documentation will employ extensive use of visual materials, such as graphs and maps, and online interactive applications will be provided for users to filter, summarize, and analyze program information.

Activity 4: Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the Internet; make information on transportation projects and programs available in a variety of formats, mediums, and languages to reach a larger audience:

- Key media are provided with periodic updates of H-GAC activities. News releases, media alerts, and meeting notices are distributed in English and Spanish to announce public review and comment periods prior to the adoption or approval of major amendments to the RTP, TIP, UPWP, PPP, and other regionally significant transportation plans or programs.
- H-GAC's Public Outreach Division includes staff experienced in news reporting and media relations and issues news releases, works with reporters to generate stories about transportation activities, responds to reporter inquiries, provides briefings, and prepares editorial commentaries.
- *The Region View* and other newsletters are distributed to all identified stakeholders, interested parties, and the media. Newsletters with a particular focus are produced to provide timely information on targeted topics. All newsletters are available on the transportation department website. Webinars related to transportation topics can be found on the H-GAC webinar page.
- H-GAC will maximize the use of emails to distribute information on major work products. The following email address will also be available on websites and printed materials for the public to submit comments via a Public Outreach Inbox: publiccomments@h-gac.com. H-GAC will work with local governments, chambers of commerce, transit agencies, and other organizations to share and distribute email notices. H-GAC will continue to expand its email distribution lists by requesting email addresses on public comment forms, on its website, and meeting registers.
- The H-GAC website provides current information about transportation planning activities. Included on this website is a listing of upcoming meetings. Agendas, meeting materials, and meeting minutes are added to the website as soon as they are available. Final documents, draft documents, or portions of draft documents under review by the public are made available when feasible. The website provides an opportunity for the public to provide input and formal comments on an ongoing basis through email links.

Activity 5: Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times:

- In addition to hosting public meetings at H-GAC's office central location, public meetings may be conducted in various locations around the region, as appropriate, in consideration of the purpose of the meeting and potential impacts arising from a proposed action. Public meetings may also be offered virtually, when feasible. Public meetings can be held during the week in the morning, at noon, and/or in the evening. Weekend day-time public meetings can be held if deemed more convenient for the community.
- Public meetings are held prior to adoption of regional plans and programs. The format

may vary from an open house setting, a formal public hearing, or as a virtual meeting. H-GAC staff attends these meetings to present transportation project activity information and recommendations and receive public comments, questions, or discussions. Comments received during public meetings are considered part of the formal public record and are posted on the H-GAC website at www.h-gac.com.

- H-GAC also hosts regularly scheduled committee meetings that are open to the public, and comments are invited. Regular and special meetings of the Transportation Policy Council, Technical Advisory Committee, Regional Transportation Plan, Regional Safety Council, and the Regional Air Quality Planning Committee are usually held once a month and the schedules are posted on the H-GAC website. Live streaming is available for monthly meetings of the Transportation Policy Council on the day of the meeting and livestreamed meeting archives are available for reviewing after the date of each meeting.

(Recordings and photos taken during public meetings may be used for marketing purposes).

Activity 6: Implement Virtual Engagement and Public Participation:

- Virtual Public meetings can be held through web conferencing platforms such as Zoom, WebEx, and GoTo Meeting. These public meetings allow more people to “attend” the meeting from the comfort of their own office or home.
- H-GAC utilizes social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube as communications tools. Content is strategically created for each platform and audience. These posts can be organic or paid promotional. The paid advertising allows for ads to geo-target a specific audience. This can be executed by entering select zip codes, age ranges, and interests.
- Regularly scheduled newsletters keep residents and elected officials informed of what’s currently happening and of upcoming events. Special edition newsletters can consist of project specific information and updates. These types of newsletters would target a specific audience interested in the project.
- Webinars typically serve as online trainings or seminars. This format allows for more people across the region to attend and allows for those who missed the webinar to view a recording. A webinar series can provide useful information on a weekly basis. This allows interested participants to return for more information gaining credibility as a reliable consistent resource for your communities.
- H-GAC acknowledges the digital divide in low income households and rural areas. This lack of access to broadband internet and technology equipment means we must engage through more traditional tactics. Some examples include telephone townhalls or voicemail lines, mailers, utility bill stuffers, a meeting in a box, and pop-ups.

Activity 7: Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the

development of plans and programs, including the RTP, TIP, RCTP, UPWP, and PPP.

- Responses to public comments are posted on the transportation department website in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) format or individually by mail or email. Whenever possible, H-GAC staff will provide responses in a timely fashion with accurate information. A report of comments received will be included in final transportation plans and documented for public participation purposes. Comments received on transportation plans or programs undertaken by other agencies will be forwarded to the appropriate agency staff or decision-making body.

Activity 8: Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems such as low-income and minorities, elderly, disabled, and limited English proficient communities who may face challenges accessing needed services. Review projects to verify that the effects of the RTP and TIP, are not disproportionately borne by minority or low-income populations, including but not limited to health, environmental, social, and economic effects.

- *Elderly* – All public outreach efforts will attempt to solicit as much feedback as possible by making meeting times and locations accessible as well as partnering with organizations that specialize in services for the region’s aging population.
- *Low-Income and Minorities* – H-GAC will make necessary efforts to understand the needs of low-income communities and determine how those needs can be met through transportation options. H-GAC has taken steps to ensure that the RTP meets all federal goals of Environmental Justice, as described in the guidelines of *Executive Order 12898*.
- *Mobility Impaired/Transit Dependent* – Through multiple types of outreach methods discussed in this document, H-GAC will be proactive in seeking input from mobility impaired and transit-dependent populations by means of public surveys using a database targeting these specific populations.

Activity 9: Provide additional opportunity for public comments if the final RTP or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by H-GAC and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.

- The public is encouraged to attend and submit comments at all public meetings. Persons interested in attending these meetings may also submit a request to be placed on the mailing list. Public comments may be submitted verbally at a public meeting, in writing via letters, facsimiles, email, comment cards, or online via the transportation department public comment link: publiccomments@h-gac.com. All verbal testimony must be accompanied by written testimony to ensure a written response.

Activity 10: Coordinate with the statewide and regional transportation planning involvement and consultation processes.

- *Local Access Management Corridor Studies* – H-GAC will consult with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and other statewide environmental agencies to

coordinate recommended improvements.

- TxDOT's Statewide e-State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) development – H-GAC will determine if its project can be coordinated with local efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of both H-GAC and TxDOT's database improvements.
- Regional Goods Movement Study – H-GAC will closely consult with TxDOT and other regional and statewide freight associations to coordinate recommended improvements.

• Amending and Updating the TIP – H-GAC will closely coordinate activities with TxDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) to ensure consistency and compliance with statewide and federal planning processes and requirements.

• Hurricane Evacuation Support Services – H-GAC will closely coordinate planning and implementation efforts with TxDOT, Harris County, and other regional and statewide emergency management agencies.

Activity 11: Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in this PPP to ensure a full and open participation process:

• H-GAC will periodically assess the effectiveness of public participation strategies and techniques to incorporate new and improved measures into our public outreach program.

• H-GAC may use direct mail evaluation surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, online surveys, comment cards, and a toll-free voicemail number 1-855-363-2516 to receive input for evaluation of the PPP.

• H-GAC will document public participation in the development of transportation plans and programs which may include:

- 1) Number of meeting notices distributed via email;
- 2) Number of open houses /informational meetings;
- 3) Times/days of public meetings;
- 4) Number of listening sessions/focus groups;
- 5) Number of addresses on mailing list;
- 6) Quantity of media coverage including number of media alerts and displays ads in newspapers;
- 7) Number of H-GAC mailings;
- 8) Quantity of educational material available including project listings, presentations, fact sheets, contact sheets, handbooks, etc.;
- 9) Number of public comment reports distributed and received; and
- 10) Number of languages used

SECTION 2 FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Current Federal statutes and regulations provide general guidelines for public involvement processes and procedures.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

The FAST Act explicitly adds public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs to the list of interested parties that an MPO must provide with reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan. [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6)(A)]

The FAST Act continues to encourage MPOs to consult with officials responsible for other types of planning activities. These include freight transportation providers, It adds to the list of such activities tourism and the reduction of risk of natural disasters. [23 U.S.C. 134(g)(3)(A)]

Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

Executive Order 12898 requires that disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations be identified and addressed to achieve environmental justice. Since the establishment of Title VI, Environmental Justice has been considered in local, state, and federal transportation projects. Section 42.104 of Title VI and related statutes require Federal agencies to ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, or religion.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

49 CFR, Part 21 states that “no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from the participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal Financial assistance.” H-GAC’s Title VI Coordinator is responsible for initiating and monitoring Title VI activities, preparing required reports, and other responsibilities as required by Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200, and Title 49 CFR Part 21.

Executive Order 13166 – Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Executive Order 13166 requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

To assist Federal agencies in carrying out these responsibilities, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document, *2002 LEP Guidance*. This Guidance sets forth the compliance standards that recipients of Federal financial assistance must follow to ensure that their programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates involving the community,

particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of services. H-GAC fully complies with these requirements through its ADA plan and policies by making meeting room facilities accessible with wheelchair ramps, room and floor numbers posted in Braille, and restrooms and elevators that are wheelchair accessible.

H-GAC facilitates public participation in transportation activities by people with disabilities using the following guidelines:

- Meetings, public hearings, and formal events are held in facilities accessible by persons with disabilities.
- Public notices of meetings and events include a notice of accommodations for individuals who are disabled. Such accommodations will be provided by request with a minimum 24-hour notice.
- Persons needing to arrange for ADA accommodations at H-GAC meetings and events may call 713-627-3200 within 24 hours of the event.

In collaboration with transit stakeholders, H-GAC can provide transportation for individuals with disabilities to attend public meetings and events at the H-GAC offices.

Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments

Executive Order 13175 states that “in formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes.” American Indian tribes have expressed an interest in the eight-county MPO planning region, even though there are no tribal governments located in the region. As a result of a request by the tribal leaders, the MPO will actively seek to keep tribal governments informed of major decisions affecting their geographic area. The MPO will continue to communicate with Native American Indian tribal leaders on an ongoing basis to identify issues of common concern.

23 CFR §450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation

- (a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- (1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:
- (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
 - (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
 - (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
 - (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in

electronically accessible formats and means, such as the Internet;

- (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
- (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and, (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the Internet to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPOs shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

- (1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
- (2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and,
- (3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 201-204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPOs shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPOs shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under §450.314.

23 CFR §450.324 Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan

(k) The MPOs shall provide individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan using the participation plan developed under §450.316(a).

(l) The MPOs shall publish or otherwise make readily available the metropolitan transportation plan for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the Internet.

23 CFR §450.326 Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP)

(b) The MPOs shall provide all interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP as required by §450.316(a). In addition, in nonattainment area TMAs, the MPOs shall provide at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process, which should be addressed through the participation plan described in §450.316(a). In addition, the MPOs shall publish or otherwise make readily available the TIP for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the Internet, as described in §450.316(a).

APPENDIX A – UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)

The UPWP is produced every two years by the MPO in cooperation with State and local agencies involved in transportation planning. The UPWP describes the transportation plans and programs and the transportation-related air quality planning activities that will be conducted during current fiscal years, regardless of funding sources or agencies conducting these activities. Many of these planning activities may result in future transportation projects. A 30-day public comment period is observed prior to adoption of the UPWP.

Public outreach activities conducted prior to adoption of the UPWP are documented in Appendix H of the UPWP. The current UPWP document can be found on the H-GAC website at http://www.h-gac.com/taq/plans_programs/upwp/.

Planning Activities for the UPWP:

1. Administration – Describes the administrative support activities such as financial management, contract management, public outreach, and the general management of the MPO.
2. Data Development – Describes the collection, maintenance, and analysis of transportation data. These activities include the development of socio-economic forecasts and travel demand models to determine where future transportation investments will be made.
3. Short-Range Planning – Addresses planning for activities taking place within a three-to ten-year timeframe, including the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Ten-Year Transportation Plan, as well as transit feasibility studies, and operations planning. Task III also includes ongoing maintenance of the Regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), as well as efforts to improve traffic safety in the region and evacuation planning.
4. Long-Range Planning – Describes planning activities for the long-term including development and maintenance of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) as well as ongoing initiatives regarding transportation-related air quality planning, regional bicycle and pedestrian planning, activities involving H-GAC's Livable Centers program, and Transportation Performance Management (TPM) activities.
5. Special Studies – Includes special one-time planning activities, including major corridor studies/analyses and support of tourism and transportation resiliency planning activities.

Planning and Interagency Collaboration and Consultation

Many of the activities described in this document support the collaborative and coordinated decision-making process between State and local government agencies, transportation providers, shippers, carriers of goods, and the residents of the region. Through the cooperation of these stakeholders, the products of these planning efforts will provide the region with greater mobility benefits.

APPENDIX B – Glossary of Transportation Planning Terms

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
AERCO Area Emission Reduction Credit Organization
CAAA Clean Air Act Amendments (of 1990 and subsequent years)
CFR Code of Federal Regulations
FAST ACT Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA Federal Highway Administration
FTA Federal Transit Administration
H-GAC Houston-Galveston Area Council
MAP-21 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
METRO Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
MCS Major Corridor Study (formerly known as Major Investment Study)
MPO Metropolitan Planning Organization
NHTSA National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
PPP Public Participation Plan
RAQPC Regional Air Quality Planning Committee
RTP Regional Transportation Plan
SIP State Implementation Plan
STIP Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TAC Technical Advisory Committee
TCEQ Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
TIP Transportation Improvement Program
TMA Transportation Management Area
TPC Transportation Policy Council
TxDPS Texas Department of Public Safety
TxDOT Texas Department of Transportation
UPWP Unified Planning Work Program
USC United States Code
US DOE US Department of Energy
US DOT US Department of Transportation
US EPA US Environmental Protection Agency

APPENDIX C - Procedures for Providing Public Comments at Transportation Policy Council (TPC) Meetings

The TPC encourages public comments on all matters relevant to regional transportation planning. To assure fair and equitable opportunities for all residents preferring to address the TPC, the following public comment procedures have been established:

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Public comments related to agenda items will be allowed at the start of the meeting before the business section of the agenda. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes and the applicant must sign up at least five (5) minutes before the start of the meeting. A person may not reserve time to appear more than once per meeting. Persons wishing to address more than one agenda item may do so during their allotted time. An agenda and meeting registers will be made available at the meeting place at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the meeting.

TPC meetings held virtually will require written public comments to be received by 5:00 p.m. the day prior to the meeting to be entered into the meeting record.

Other Public Presentations

Other public presentations not related to business indicated on the agenda must be submitted to the Chairman twenty-one (21) days in advance of the regular meeting and will be added to the agenda at the Chairman's discretion. If approved as an agenda item, the presentation will be limited to ten (10) minutes.

Requests to deliver such a presentation should be submitted in writing to:
Transportation Policy Council Chairman Attn: Mr. Patrick Mandapaka
Houston-Galveston Area Council P. O. Box 22777 Houston, TX 77227-2777

Written Comments

The TPC welcomes written comments relating to agenda items or other regional transportation planning concerns. For written comments exceeding three (3) standard 8 1/2" x 11" pages, twenty-five (25) copies must be provided. Written comments should be sent to the TPC Chairman at the above address.

Invited Comments

The Chairman may at any time during the meeting invite comments from the audience. Responses to comments by the Chairman will not be verbally addressed at the meeting.

Information Required

The following information will be required of all persons making either oral or written comments:

1. Full name
2. Affiliation (if applicable)
3. Mailing address and email address
4. Agenda Item(s) or topic to be addressed

APPENDIX D – Adoption and Revision of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

As the primary implementation tool of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), adoption and revision of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a key component of the public participation process for the MPO.

A new TIP is developed every two years in a collaborative process between transportation implementation agencies, service providers, and the public. This process is carried out by H-GAC through its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and designated subcommittees. Prior to final review and approval by the Transportation Policy Council (TPC), public meetings are held to present the new TIP, and a comment period of not less than 30 days is observed.

Because the delivery of transportation projects and services is dynamic, revisions to the TIP occur frequently between biennial updates. These revisions are also subject to public review and comment, with the level of public participation dependent upon the significance of the revision proposed.

Minor revisions, referred to as Administrative Modifications, are approved by the MPO Director and presented to the TPC for information and comment. All other revisions require TPC approval, following review and recommendation by the TAC.

When a proposed revision has the potential to affect a significant portion of the region's traveling public, it is classified as a Major Amendment and is subject to public notice and opportunity for comment.

While revisions to the TIP are typically made at the request of project sponsors, in no case will a revision be proposed without prior notification of the sponsor. In all cases, revisions to the TIP, including Administrative Modifications, are subject to TxDOT approval.

The following tables detail how proposed revisions to the TIP are acted upon.

Table 1. Responsibility for Approval

| Type of Revision | MPO Director [†] | TAC | TPC |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| I. Adoption of the TIP | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| II. Revision of the TIP | | | |
| (1) Addition or Removal of Projects and Phases | | | |
| (a) Addition or removal of any project; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (b) Addition or removal of a project's phase less than \$5.0 million; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (c) Addition or removal of a project's phase equal to or over \$5.0 million; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (d) Combining two or more existing projects or phases; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (e) Carry over of a funded project or project phase from a previous TIP cycle; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (f) Other; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (2) Scope and Cost Change | | | |
| (a) Less than or equal to 25% of phase or less than \$500k; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (b) Over 25% of phase and more than \$500k; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (c) Scope change necessitating a recalculation of system level air quality conformity of non-exempt project; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (d) Other significant scope changes; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (e) Other minor scope changes; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (3) Fund Source Change | | | |
| (a) Addition or removal of federal or state funding allocated to the MPO for project selection; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |
| (b) Change between federal or state fund sources allocated to the MPO for project selection; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (c) Any other fund source change; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (4) Schedule Change | | | |
| (a) All affected phases are contained within the four years of the TIP before and after the schedule change; | Approve | ---- | ---- |
| (b) Any other schedule change; | ---- | Recommend | Approve |

[†] The MPO Director may elect to defer Administrative Modifications to the TAC and TPC at his or her discretion.

Table 2. Opportunity for Public Review & Comment

| | |
|---|--|
| I. Adoption of the TIP | Public meetings and a public comment period of not less than 30 days will be held prior to Transportation Policy Council (TPC) adoption of the TIP. Additional opportunities for public review are provided informally throughout the TIP development process. |
| II. Revision of the TIP | |
| (A) Major Amendments [‡] (TPC) | Major Amendments to the TIP will be noticed on the H-GAC website at least 30 days prior to TPC action and require a public meeting and a public comment period of not less than 10 days be held. Additional comment may be provided at TAC and TPC meetings as detailed in Appendix C. |
| (B) Other Amendments (TPC) | Other Amendments to the TIP are provided for public review through TAC and TPC meeting documentation. Appendix C details the procedures for public comment at TPC meetings. |
| (C) Administrative Modifications (MPO Director) | Administrative Modifications do not specifically require public involvement prior to MPO Director action, but are provided for public review through TPC meeting documentation. Appendix C details the procedures for public comment at TPC meetings. |
| <p>‡ A Major Amendment is a revision to the TIP where:</p> <p>(a) A project or phase thereof greater than or equal to \$10 million is added or removed from the TIP;</p> <p>(b) Multiple projects or phases thereof with an aggregate value greater than or equal to \$25 million are added or removed from the TIP;</p> <p>(c) A cost change is proposed that would require the delay of another project beyond the 4 years of the TIP;</p> <p>(d) A scope change is proposed that would necessitate a re-demonstration of system level air quality conformity of non-exempt project.</p> | |

APPENDIX E – Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficient Populations

Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency” (LEP) directs federal agencies to ensure that persons with limited proficiency in the English language have meaningful access to all federally conducted activities and services. This requirement is in keeping with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

The obligation of Executive Order 13166 extends to all entities that receive federal financial assistance for any of their programs, plans, or activities. As a recipient of federal funds, H-GAC will take reasonable steps to ensure that all residents of the planning region are given meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities. In furtherance of this commitment, H-GAC will implement a language assistant program to protect the rights of persons with LEP and to ensure that linguistic isolation is not a barrier to their access to and enjoyment of the transportation services and other related benefits available to residents of the region.

Identification of Limited English Proficient Populations and How They are Served

The eight-county region served by the H-GAC MPO is home to a diverse population of more than 6.3 million residents, according to the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. A significant proportion of these residents speak languages other than English as their primary or “home” language and have English language skills that limit their ability for meaningful communication. They are members of several immigrant communities that include persons of Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Filipino, Hispanic/Latino, and African descent among others. The limited ability to communicate in English can be a barrier to benefiting from transportation related programs, services, and activities. Knowing who these LEP communities are and where they are located helps to inform and guide public outreach staff in outreach efforts directed at that population. LEP individuals are defined by the US Census Bureau as persons five years and older who speak the English language less than “very well.”

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) recommends a four-factor analysis to evaluate the extent to which language assistance measures are required to ensure meaningful access for the LEP populations during transportation planning and program implementation. The four factors are:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program;
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people’s lives; and,
4. The resources available to the recipient and costs.

TABLE 1. LEP Population for the Eight-County Houston Metropolitan Region +

| Metropolitan Planning Region County | Pop. 5 years and Over | Total LEP Population | % LEP of Total Population | Total LEP of Spanish Language Population | Total LEP of Asian Language Population | Total LEP of Indo-European Language Population | Total LEP of "Other" Language Population |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Brazoria | 307,400 | 24,417 | 7.9% | 19,141 | 4,087 | 723 | 466 |
| Chambers | 34,716 | 3,343 | 9.6% | 2,922 | 169 | 203 | 49 |
| Fort Bend | 612,667 | 79,947 | 13.0% | 38,165 | 26,351 | 11,715 | 3,716 |
| Galveston | 287,973 | 18,339 | 6.4% | 14,660 | 2,379 | 1,147 | 213 |
| Harris | 4,013,836 | 819,879 | 20.4% | 681,373 | 88,594 | 34,384 | 15,528 |
| Liberty | 72,186 | 4,698 | 6.5% | 4,462 | 160 | 76 | 0 |
| Montgomery | 467,817 | 38,123 | 8.1% | 34,566 | 2,191 | 1,066 | 300 |
| Waller | 42,816 | 4,497 | 10.5% | 4,387 | 23 | 83 | 4 |
| MPO Total | 5,839,411 | 993,243 | 17.0% | 799,676 | 123,954 | 49,397 | 20,276 |

+ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

The US DOT Guidance intimates that the presence of a large LEP population who frequently seek access to a program, activity, or service that offers a significant benefit is a plausible indicator that an enhanced language assistance service is required. However, agencies that receive federal funds are not required to provide language assistance services to every language group that may exist within their jurisdiction, as this may be prohibitively expensive and constitute an undue burden to the agency. The size of the available budget or relative cost of providing language assistance interventions may ultimately determine the scale and appropriate "mix" of the language assistance measures expected from the agency.

Language assistance services may be provided in two ways: (1) oral interpretation in person or electronically; and (2) written translation services. The appropriate solution will be based on what is necessary and reasonable considering the circumstances.

Factor 1: The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population

The 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data published by the US Census Bureau indicate that of the 5.8 million residents in the H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Region aged 5 and over, as many as 993,243 or 17% of the residents speak the English language at a level of proficiency that is less than "very well." (This compares with an estimated 14.2% statewide and only 8.6% nationally, that speak the English language less "very well"). These residents constitute the LEP population within the H-GAC region. Geographically, they are located largely in several ethnic minority communities within the City of Houston, Harris County, as well as in disparate districts in the smaller towns and cities in the adjacent sub-urban counties. By a large margin, residents in the H-GAC region who have limited English proficiency skills are predominantly Spanish speaking. Other languages prominently spoken by LEP residents in the

region include Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Tagalog, and a mix of African languages. Table 2 describes the most common non-English languages spoken by LEP populations in the H-GAC region, compared with the numbers statewide and across the nation.

TABLE 2. Non-English Languages Spoken in the Houston Metropolitan Planning Region+

| | Pop. 5 Years and Older | LEP Persons | LEP % of Pop | Spanish LEP | Vietnamese LEP | Chinese LEP | Arabic LEP | Korean LEP |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| H-GAC | 5,839,411 | 993,243 | 17.0% | 80.51% | 5.71% | 3.55% | 0.96% | 0.54% |
| Texas | 24,587,309 | 3,491,398 | 14.2% | 85.81% | 3.36% | 2.15% | 0.68% | 0.86% |
| USA | 296,603,003 | 25,410,756 | 8.6% | 64.17% | 3.38% | 6.80% | 1.52% | 2.41% |

+ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

Census Bureau records further reveal that over the years, there has been a continuous rise in the overall numbers as well as in the proportion of the population of the region classified as LEP individuals. (See Table 3). This trend is expected to continue.

TABLE 3. Growth of LEP Population in the Houston Metropolitan Planning Region +

| | Total MPO Population | Pop 5 Years and Older | LEP Persons | % LEP in Population |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 2000 Census | 4,669,571 | 4,297,107 | 665,310 | 15.5% |
| 2010 ACS # | 5,655,671 | 5,197,325 | 906,790 | 17.4% |
| 2015 ACS | 6,317,767 | 5,839,411 | 993,243 | 17.0% |
| % Change 2000 - 2015 | 26.1% | 26.4% | 33.0% | --- |

+ Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census; 2006 – 2010 and 2011 - 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate.

Beginning 2010, questions about language were no longer asked on the decennial census.

Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with program, activity, or service

H-GAC interacts continuously with members of the public and the LEP population in the development and administration of its programs, services, and activities within the eight counties that constitute the H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Region. A significant amount of the contact with the LEP population is obtained in the comments submitted to the H-GAC transportation and air quality website and the agency’s online public information Inbox, interaction at the quarterly public meetings, the monthly committee open meetings, and the

public outreach events held in the region for various purposes. A return message is sent by email, telephone, or US Mail service acknowledging that the public comments were received and are being reviewed, or have been reviewed and will be acted upon. Responses to public comments are provided to the enquirers in their preferred language of communication.

H-GAC provides several other accommodations to LEP residents in their continuous contact with that population. Legal notices, email blasts, and flyers advertising public meetings include instructions about how to obtain translations of information in a language other than English. To encourage participation by residents whose primary language of communication is not English, the MPO has published online surveys in several languages. Advertisements for public meetings are sometimes placed in local community newspapers in the three languages most widely spoken: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. In addition, H-GAC could use consultant services or telephone translation facilities to translate public outreach materials targeted at non-English speakers. Interpreters are made available for live translations at open meetings when requested. Furthermore, H-GAC has several bilingual staff who can translate into Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other languages that are spoken within the regional community.

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people's lives

H-GAC serves the citizens in the Houston Metropolitan Planning Region through the implementation of its planning programs, activities and services. The MPO establishes transportation investment priorities through a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) anticipated to meet the region's projected mobility needs over a twenty five-year horizon; the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - a fiscally constrained list of multi-modal transportation projects approved for implementation within a four-year window; a two-year Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that outlines projects scheduled for the current fiscal year, and the Access Management Plan for developing and implementing operational and travel-demand strategies that improve transportation system performance and safety. These transportation/transit programs and investments are important to the lives of the LEP population as it provides them with improved mobility choices and enhances their daily access to employment, housing, social services, education, and recreation. It is important that the traditionally underrepresented particularly the LEP populations are assured meaningful access to the planning process and the opportunity to participate in the benefits of the region's transportation services.

H-GAC is also responsible for developing and implementing strategies to reduce transportation-related emissions that lead to ozone formation in the eight-county region. Due to the Houston metropolitan region's air quality non-attainment status, H-GAC plans must show transportation conformity and compliance with rules established under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. H-GAC's undertakings also guide the development and maintenance of a multimodal transportation system, support regional economic activity, improve roadway safety, help to conserve and protect the natural and cultural resources in the region, and promotes the health, wellbeing and the overall quality of life of all residents of the region, including the LEP population. Denying the LEP populations access to these benefits would have a detrimental impact on their lives.

Factor 4: The resources available to the recipient and costs

H-GAC will continue to assess the need for language assistance interventions as it designs and implements its planning programs, activities, and services, and will tailor its LEP language assistant services to both the identified need as well as the resources that are available to support the purpose.

Plan for Providing Services to LEP Residents

The languages most widely spoken by LEP populations in the Houston Metropolitan Planning Region are Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. To effectively serve LEP residents in the Planning Region, H-GAC recognizes the need to be able to communicate with them in the primary language in which they are proficient. To achieve this purpose H-GAC will ensure that language assistance is provided at no cost to LEP residents who indicate a need for these services at agency-organized meetings and events. H-GAC will take the following actions to ensure that LEP residents have reasonable access to its programs, services, and activities:

1. Periodically identify and update records on the location of LEP populations who may need language assistance and the non-English languages that are commonly spoken within the planning region.
 - Obtain current US Census Bureau data reporting on the languages spoken by residents in the region. Validate this data with information from school district enrollment records, social surveys, institutions of higher education, and MPO records.
 - Utilize Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software to map the spatial distribution of individuals with limited English language proficiency skills and identify areas of concentration of people of specific language groups as a guide to planning outreach efforts and strategies.

2. Employ standards and guidelines for ensuring that language is not a barrier to services and meaningful participation of in the eight-county transportation planning area.
 - Identify early the need for language assistance services and provide timely and effective notice of its availability to persons in need of these services.
 - Adopt uniform translations for commonly circulated reports, documents, and marketing/outreach materials in the languages of choice of the LEP population.
 - Maintain a clearinghouse of certified interpreter/translator services that can be contracted to provide translation services when needed.

3. Identify best practices to improve access and participation by the LEP population.
 - Publicize agency events through public service announcements in local and ethnic media outlets and educate on citizens' rights to language assistance.
 - Distribute or post flyers written in the languages that will best communicate to the LEP target populations.

- Introduce multi-lingual “I Speak” card Activity that invites LEP individuals to identify their alternate language needs.
- Adopt “inclusive design” strategies in agency website to introduce sensitivity to the needs of the LEP population.
- Engage the help of community advocates with expertise in the culture, language, and values of the local ethnic community to assist in reaching and mobilizing the LEP community.

4. Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the PPP to assess whether it has been successful in creating opportunities for meaningful involvement for the LEP population.

Monitoring and Updating the Language Assistance Program

This document is designed to be flexible and easy to modify. H-GAC will review and update its language assistance program periodically to ensure that it is responsive to the specific needs represented in the planning region. Copies of this plan may be obtained by downloading from the H-GAC website. Persons without Internet access may request a copy by writing the H-GAC Public Outreach Manager at the address listed below. Any questions or comments regarding this plan should also be directed to the H-GAC Public Outreach Manager or the EEO Coordinator.

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*Adopted Resolution for the Public Participation Plan
(Once approved)*