

9. CALL FOR PARTNERS FOR THE COMMUTER AND TRANSIT PILOT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The Commuter and Transit Pilot Program is supported by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds through an Advance Funding Agreement with TxDOT. This program helps launch innovative transit and transit supportive solutions that reduce vehicle emissions and vehicle miles traveled across the eight-county Metropolitan Planning Area. Since 1999, H-GAC has partnered with local transit agencies, cities, counties, and management districts to launch pilot projects that have expanded into permanent regional service, significantly improving long-term mobility.

Through a competitive Call for Partners, H-GAC collaborates with eligible sponsors to plan, fund, and implement new or expanded transportation services. H-GAC staff evaluates all proposals to ensure alignment with federal CMAQ eligibility, regional transportation goals, and long-term operational sustainability.

Selected pilots are supported for up to three to five years depending on the funding structure elected by the sponsoring agency. Once the pilot period ends, sponsors transition successful services to alternative funding sources for long-term operations. Historically, the program required project sponsors to provide a 20% local match. The current funding structure for the project, as approved by the Transportation Policy Council, provides Transportation Development Credits (TDC) as a match.

CURRENT SITUATION

Through the most recent Advance Funding Agreement (AFA) with TxDOT, the Commuter and Transit Pilot Program expects to release a Call for Projects and to award up to two (2) new pilot projects next year. The proposed call for projects introduces two policy refinements: transitioning to an annual call to remain responsive to regional needs; and replacing the traditional 20% local match, since the AFA is now matched with TDCs, with a 10% local funds contribution. This contribution will be used to support transportation planning activities approved by TPC in the Unified Planning Work Program and the work of the regional transportation demand management program, Commute Solutions in accordance with H-GAC guidelines.

Staff presented this item to the Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee (RTCS) during their regularly scheduled October 8, 2026, meeting and included their feedback into the program guidelines. Additionally, staff presented this item to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) during their regularly scheduled meeting on October 14, 2026, and received several favorable comments from the local agencies that are currently participating or have participated in prior CMAQ Commuter Pilot programs. Staff anticipate opening the call for partners in January 2027.

ACTION REQUESTED

Discussion only.