

Appendix 16
Public Comment Process

HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

Public Comment period/Public Meeting

H-GAC is announcing the opening of a 30-day public comment period to give the public an opportunity to review the following:

- New air quality conformity finding for revisions to the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program and the 2035 Regional Transportation Program.
- 2009 Section 5307 Program of Projects (POP) for transit providers in the Houston, Lake Jackson/Angleton, The Woodlands, Texas City/LaMarque and Galveston Urbanized Areas. The transit providers are the Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO), Harris County, Fort Bend County, Connect Transit and The District. This public notice and public comment period will satisfy the federal public notice requirements for each of the transit providers regarding its transit program of projects for fiscal year 2009. The proposed program unless amended, will meet the requirements regarding the final POP. Upon amendment, H-GAC will make available a final publication of the POP.

H-GAC will host a public meeting on the items shown above on **August 13, 2009**, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the H-GAC offices, 3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor Conference Room A. The public is encouraged to attend and provide comments to H-GAC. Submit all written comments to Transportation Public Information, Houston-Galveston Area Council, P.O. Box 22777, Houston, Texas 77227-2777, email to publiccomments@h-gac.com, or fax to (713) 993-4508.

The public comment period will begin on July 22, 2009 and will end on August 22, 2009 at 5:00 pm. For more information regarding any of the information above, visit http://www.h-gac.com/taq/public_info.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, H-GAC will provide for reasonable accommodations for persons attending H-GAC functions. Requests from persons needing special accommodations should be received by H-GAC staff 24 hours prior to a function. The public meeting will be conducted in English, and requests for language interpreters or other special communication needs should be made at least two working days prior to a function. Please call 713-993-4557 for assistance.

Following are the FHWA comments with our H-GAC answers in red (6/26/09):

FHWA Travel Model Network Comments

June 26, 2009

- *IH 45N HOV Lanes FM 1960 to LP (loop) 336 S - move to 2019*
FM 1960 to FM 2920 # 12725
FM 2920 to Harris/Montgomery C/L # 12724
Montgomery C/L to SH 242 # 12599
SH 242 to LP 336 S Add new project to database

Modeling appears to indicate 1 or 2 HOV lanes in each direction in all analysis years. This is unexpected as the proposed change is to delay the extension of the HOV lanes until 2019.

Yes, you are correct. Since the space for the diamond lanes was already built, the restriping had been originally scheduled for 2009. However, it was later determined that the restriping would be postponed and moved back to a future year. The network model was in error. The diamond lanes were coded as complete in 2009 instead of being pushed back. The error has been corrected.

Also it appears that the HOV lanes only extend to Creighton Road (rather than LP 336 S). Please explain.

An older project revealed that space for future diamond lanes had already been built from FM 1488 to Creighton Road. However, new information indicated that the restriping would extend to LP 336 instead of Creighton Road. Project MPOID 14626 (diamond lane striping from FM 1488 to LP 336) has been added to the Model network.

- *BF 1960 from 1960 w of Humble to 1960 E of Humble - Remove 4 Lane expansion from plan change to 2 lanes in all years. Modeled under 53 & 54*

No comment.

- *Allendale Extension: Oaks Rd. and Judy St. - Remove from Plan # 13611*

Modeling appears to indicate removal of widening along Allendale/Garner rather than the extension of Allendale. Please explain.

The extension was to replace an existing 2 lane through street that dog legged into a residential area that connected to Shaver/Garner road. This 2 lane street is also called Allendale. The proposed 4 lane extension would have eliminated a dog leg turn to a more direct path to Garner Road. However, since Allendale Street is an existing arterial through street it is still be represented in the Modeling network for connectivity purposes as a 2 lane road. A graphic extension was never created for this project, only an adjustment to the record, and the record MPOID 13611 was removed.

- *Little York Between Airline and Hardy Toll Rd - Change from 6 lanes (in 2025 and 2035) to 4 Lanes (in 2019, 2025 and 2035) Cancel #14590 (6 lanes) from database Modeled under 4098*

No comment.

- *Dulles Ave from SH 6 to US highway 90A- project incorrectly modeled as widening from 4 to 6 lanes; project will reconstruct 4 through lanes and add 2 auxiliary lanes.*

No comment. *FM 2234 from FM 521 to SH 288- remove 6 lanes # 12758- Keep as 4 lanes in plan*

Modeling appears to indicate 4-lanes in 2009 for section of FM 2234 between FM 521 and CR 48. Please explain.

MPOID 10587 (FM 2234 between Brazoria/Fort Bend County Line to FM 521)

The conformity year had been modified and moved back to 2015.

It was overlooked in the network, but has been corrected.

- *Modeling appears to indicate 2-lanes along SH 105 from the Montgomery county line to the SH 105 Bypass in Cleveland for 2019. This is unexpected as it is our understanding that SH 105 is proposed for widening to 4-lanes from 10th Street in Conroe to the SH 105 Bypass in Cleveland with a 2015 open to traffic date. Please explain.*

The original plan document indicated a 4 lane expansion project from Conroe to SH 105 Bypass in Cleveland by 2015. The project stretched through 3 counties therefore, smaller segments were created for each county. However, the portion in Liberty County from the county line to the SH 105 Bypass was missed. We will add the project as a 4 lane in 2015 (MPOID 14633).

- *105 Cleveland Bypass- modeled as widening to 6 lanes; project is to widen to 4 lanes in 2025*

Modeling appears to indicate a 2-lane improvement on the SH 105 bypass between SH 105 west of Cleveland and FM 1010 in 2009. This is unexpected as this portion of the SH 105 bypass is not currently under construction.

The network model shows the west portion of the bypass currently under construction and the east portion not under construction. The model was in error, the two projects should be reversed. The correction to the model has been made.

MPOID 199 LET (portion east of FM 1010) 2 lane, currently under construction and modeled 2009.

MPOID 14517 TIP (portion west of FM 1010) 2 lane, LET date 2009 and modeled in 2010.

- *SH 105 in Montgomery County - modeled as 6 lanes; project should be 4 lanes; revise limits as Walden Road to Old River Road (0.870 miles) as 6 lanes*

Original plan document stated: MPOID 7704, SH 105 between FM 149 and Snug Harbor was to be widened from 4 to 6 lanes in 2025.

MPOID 7704 has now revised the limits to SH 105 between Walden and Old river road for widening from 4 to 6 lanes in 2025. The Network Model has been corrected.

- *SH 87 Galveston Ferry Landing to Bolivar Ferry Landing Toll Bridge - remove from plan #12435 (model), #13866 (RTP)*

No comment.

Following is an email from TxDOT regarding their comments (7/7/09):

From: Paul Tiley [mailto:PTILEY@dot.state.tx.us]
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2009 3:35 PM
To: Jose.Campos@dot.gov; Van Slyke, Chris; Lubertino, Graciela; Whitworth, Shelley
Cc: Elvia Cardinal; Jackie Ploch; Peggy Thurin; Steven Stafford; mmcallis@tceq.state.tx.us
Subject: Re: FHWA Travel Model Network Comments 06-26-2009.doc

Chris/Graciela/Shelly,

I am sorry that I am tardy in getting my comments to you. I don't have any thing else other than what Jose has identified.

Paul Tiley

Following is another email from TxDOT regarding their comments with our H-GAC answers in red (7/29/09):

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Houston District submits the following comments for the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) 2009 Conformity Determination for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

1. **Conformity Determination Document:** The Link Type Classification Codes -Table 3.2 on page 3-11 listed under 3.0 Data Preparation Network Development of the Conformity Determination document is currently missing the Highway link facility types for "Smart" and "Express" streets along with their link type codes 90 and 91 respectively. Please include these two facility types in Table 3.2. Also, please change Table 3.2 to read Table 3.1 and other subsequent tables in chapter 3 accordingly. I believe this table is currently mislabeled as Table 3.2 instead of Table 3.1. **The link facility types for "Smart" and "Express" streets are missing from the table because this table represents the network of the 2002 validation year, for which these links did not exist at that time. The tables have been re-numbered accordingly.**
2. **Appendix 7 Final RTP Link Listing:** Appendix 7 Final RTP Link Listing table should be corrected to include footnote, page number, and date just like Appendix 12. **The footnote, page number and date were added to Appendix 7.**
3. **Appendix 12, Project listing:** SH 146, CSJ 0389-06-095, on page 70 of 227 scope of work is inaccurate, the scope should be corrected to read **"WIDEN TO 6-LANE WITH 4-LANE EXPRESS LANES"**. The scope of work is currently missing the word **"Arterial"**. **It has been corrected.**
4. **Appendix 12, Project listing:** **Change the CSJ #: for SH 146 project, MPO Project ID # 14632 on page 149 of 227 from a planning CSJ #: 0389-05-908 to a real CSJ #: CSJ: 0389-05-116. It has been corrected.**
5. **Appendix 12, Project listing:** Second footnote **"**2015 Conformity Year in Network 2019"** is misleading since we only have four (4) official "Analysis Years", 2009, 2015, 2025, and 2035 in the 2035 RTP. The 2015 year is not an official analysis year, therefore, the footnote should be clarified to accurately reflect the intent of the footnote. **It has been corrected.**
6. **General Comment:** TxDOT would also like for Appendices 7 and 12 to be made available/or provided in Excel format in addition to the current PDF format for easy query. **Appendices 7 and 12 are available now in our ftp site in excel format.**

Should you have any questions or need additional information regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me at (713) 802-5310.

Below is the transcript from the Public Meeting for the conformity finding on August 13, 2009

Conformity Finding to RTP and TIP - Public Meeting

August 13, 2009

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120

Second Floor Conference Room A

Graciela Lubertino

Patricia Waskowiak: Hi, Good evening, thank you all for coming out on this rather stormy afternoon. We are here tonight to talk about a number of issues you see them on the agenda, air quality, conformity, we have some section 5307 transit programs that we want to review with you all and then TIGGER with the economic stimulus we have had two different grant programs one is TIGER and the other is TIGGER. My name is Pat Waskowiak I'm with the Houston-Galveston Area Council and again I thank you for coming tonight. Just wanted to give you a sort of all introductions about what all this stuff relates too. The Houston-Galveston Area Council is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the eight county region and that includes Harris and the seven surrounding counties. The Metropolitan Planning Organization by federal and state statute is responsible for conducting transportation planning and programming within that eight county area. We do that via our Transportation Policy Council it is a group of city and county officials who represent their various agencies that serve on the Transportation Policy Council they actually meet right here once a month and their job really is to make decisions about transportation planning activities within eight county region and more importantly the allocations of federal transportation funds that come to the region via the highway and transit programs and their distribution to projects within the region. So in order to do that H-GAC staff does is put together for them a Regional Transportation Plan

and that is a long range planning document that says what the region is looking at doing over the next 20 years as far as highway and transit expenditures. It includes a variety of modes I should just limit it to those two but those are the two primary categories but we also look at bike and pedestrian amenities, as well as safety program improvements and so on. It is a very long range, very broad wide ranging document that covers all modes within the region. This region is a nonattainment region for air quality what that means is we don't meet the national ambient air quality standard for ozone. With that designation as a nonattainment area comes some additional requirements for the regional transportation plan. We must as we develop the Transportation Plan we must meet air quality conformity standards that are set by the state. We have emissions budget that is set by the state and as we develop the plan for the region as we make changes to it we have to insure the changes in our projects plan does not exceed our air quality budgets for the pollutant ozone. That is a big part of what we are talking about tonight we recently had to make a series of changes to planned projects and that resulted in us having to run a new air quality conformity analysis. Why did we make the changes in the projects? Because the regional transportation plan is a dynamic document we develop it but it represents really project development within the region so one of the first steps is planning so for anything to happen in this region and to be federally funded it has to be first included in the transportation plan. Then it will go through a series of stages of project development and as that happens we often

have to make changes to description of the project to its cost timing and what year we think it's going to happen. So when we start making changes like that it often triggers a new air quality conformity analysis and when we do that we hold a public meeting to describe the changes we are making and give the public an opportunity to comment on those and to comment on the results of the air quality conformity analysis. Dr. Lubertino with H-GAC handles that work for us and she will talk to you in more detail about that. The transit section 5307 what is that? Those are transit federal formula dollars that come to the region for our transit services so each year when congress passes the budget for the year it makes an authorization to each of those states and each of the metropolitan regions throughout the country that designates how much federal money they're going to receive for what's called the formula program and in large urban areas like Houston the formula is based on a number of different criteria, like population, population density, a number of fixed guide way lane miles, things like that, but those dollars come to us by formula from the federal government and each year we have to amend our program of projects to reflex the latest budget allocations so that's what that's all about you won't see anything earth shaking in that program of projects there dollars to buy buses, dollars to operate buses or trains, or dollars to maintain all that sort of stuff and again those are routine activities of our transit authority. We again give the public an opportunity to comment on that program of projects. Finally the TIGGER Grant application for METRO I'm going to save that for a

little bit this is part of the whole economic stimulus package that you've heard about in the news and so on. Early this year the president signed into law the American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and that is a huge bill \$787 billion dollars. It covers an enormous range of activities in many different areas of the federal government and there are a number of discretionary grant opportunities within the bill the TIGGER Grant is one of those and METRO is making applications to the federal government for funding through that grant program that hasn't been decided yet but we'll see what happens and we have representatives from METRO here this evening and we'll give them an opportunity to talk about it specifically in a minute. Let me know just pause for a second, I would like to thank Tracy Diller??? with Commissioner Garcia's office for being with us tonight. Are there any questions to date before we get into the specifics on any I've said? No, ok... I will let Graciela walk you through air quality conformity.

Graciela Lubertino - As you may already know the last conformity determination was approved actually on June 2008 and this conformity was triggered mainly because the description of some projects in our data base didn't agree with the description that TxDOT had in their NEPA documentation, then we had to modify the description in our data base and in some cases remove those projects and then we also corrected some errors in our network. These are our air quality results on the left are the budgets from the last SIP or state

implementation plan for NOx and VOC and we run conformity for the years 2009, 2019, 2025 and 2035. You can see that the NOx and VOC emissions are below the budgets so we show that we conform to the state implementation plan. Then, we have the vehicle miles traveled for the region for those years, and the difference in VMT from last conformity, so you can see that the difference in miles travel is very small in comparison with the last conformity results. The list of all the modified projects is in the background paper. It's a total of 15 projects. The time line that we have is that the public comment period started on July 22, 2009 and will finish August 22, 2009, and today is the public meeting. We are planning to go to the TAC and TPC by the end of August for approval and will go to Federal Highways in September.

Pat Waskowiak - As Graciela stated there is a list of project changes in the handouts again they look pretty iniquitous were changing the lanes for six to four lanes those kinds of things because originally we thought this project would be a six lane facility but in fact it is going to be completed as a four lane and we didn't know it when we originally did it. So we have to change our models and air quality conformity.

Public - To get these reductions under the budget some of the transportation control measures you were using like increasing lane

foot what other type of transportation control measures were taken to keep these numbers down in the eight county regions?

Pat - We do have a number of transportation control measures that we've committed to as part of the state implementation plan. There are a variety of project there are some bike lane projects, help me out Graciela.

Graciela - Most of them are bike lane projects but since we were well below the budgets we did not need to use them because that is an off model calculation. We just used the results coming out of the air quality model without any need to do any further subtraction.

Pat - I think what she may be getting at though is why are we doing a widening how do we offset the added capacity. What we have to do when we add a project to the plan an added capacity project we have to do congestion mitigation analysis on it and that analysis will say it will look at alternatives basically so instead of doing this widening is there something else you could do to relieve congestion in that facility and it looks at is it improving signalization what we call some traffic system management alternatives (TSM's) traffic signalization would be one, dedicated turning bays those sorts of usually lower cost less intrusive improvements than a widening

project, if we can't get the same amount of congestion reduction from the alternatives considered then the widening project is approved via the congestion management analysis and goes into the plan. Now, what happens is that because added capacity projects are so expensive because they are difficult to do particularly because you have to buy right-of-way and do all the environmental analysis and so on, a lot of time is much easier for sponsors to look at adding those alternatives first are there fixes they can do in the short term to the facility to get improvements at least in the short term, those usually have a limited life span. At some point as the area continues to grown in number of vehicles using the facility, you're going to end up doing a widening. What you see a lot is that the plan project is done in phases we may have a TSM alternament early on and later on in the plan in outer years we'll have the widening. These projects that you're looking at could run gammic from 200 9 all the way to 2035 so it's a pretty long project list and it includes a lot of different phases of projects. On any one of these I don't know off hand on a lot of them where they fall in that plan cycle. Any other question or comments? NONE. Thank you. So, that is all we have. Again, if there are any questions or comments or anything that you would like to ask after this meeting, please, feel free to contact us at our website H-GAC.com; in our front page we have public information.



Air Quality Conformity Public Meeting Comment Card

H-GAC 2nd Floor Conf. Rm A
Thursday, August 13, 2009

Name: Debra Balthazan / DEF

Email Address: debra55@subell.net

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Comments / Questions / Concerns: _____

Impressed w/ information presented
and the green initiatives by METRO

Thank you! Please check here if you would you like to be added to the H-GAC Transportation Department's mailing list.

Public input is vital to the success of these proposed improvements. Written comments can be made online at PublicComment@h-gac.com, faxed to 713-993-4508, or mailed to H-GAC Transportation Public Information, P.O. Box 22777, Houston, TX 77227-2777.

Following is an email from TCEQ (8/27/09) regarding their comments with our answers in red:

Graciela:

Regarding the conformity documents received on CD by mail in early August, I have the following comments:

1. We have reviewed the MOBILE emission modeling documentation including inputs and outputs and parameters, and have no comments.
2. We had previously suggested the checklist (appendix 17) be edited so that the item Functional Class is not blank (you had indicated you would add freeways, arterials, and collectors). **Sorry, I thought that I had already done it. I'll do it asap.**
3. Regarding Appendix 16, did you receive any public comments? **Yes, I need to add them. They were very few and not adverse.**
4. The table of contents lists appendices 18, 19, and 20, yet neither the CD nor Web site contains these appendices, for example, Alternate 2005 TxLED Calculation. **Sorry, I need to modify the table of contents.**
5. I'm having a difficult time connecting appendix ~~14~~ 13 listing of TCMs timely implementation to SIP-adopted TCMs:

-- the TCEQ mid course review adopted December 2004, Appendix F.6 http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/implementation/air/sip/dec2004hgb_mcr.html

-- the TCM substitutions approved Spring 2006:
http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/implementation/air/sip/tcm_hgb.html

Margie, due to your comments Appendix 13 has been replaced. David Wurdlow (david.wurdlow@h-gac.com 713-993-2490), our new database expert can assist you regarding these listings.

Also, Appendix ~~14~~ 13 is dated May 27, 2007, yet the TCM appendix 13 from the August 2007 conformity is dated October 2007. **Sorry, somehow we had an old version, but now it has been replaced.**

I anticipate that you will be able to help me walk thru Appendix ~~14~~ 13. I do not expect that these comments will negatively impact your schedule or conformity determination.

Margie