Regional Transit Coordination (RTC) Subcommittee Meeting Houston-Galveston Area Council Online Meeting/Conference Call Thursday January 14, 2021 9:30-11:00 AM

Agenda

- 1. Introductions and Certification of Quorum (9) Perri D'Armond, Fort Bend County Transit, Chair
- 2. Public Comments
- 3. Action Items:
 - 3.1 Adoption of Agenda
 - 3.2 Approval of RTC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes of October 8, 2020
- 4. Information Items: (15 minutes or less each)
 - 4.1 Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan (RCTP) Update: Vision, Goals and Objectives Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC
 - 4.2 Public Transportation Agency Safety Targets Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC
 - 4.3 General Transit Feed Specification Update and Demonstration Chris Whaley and Donte Green, H-GAC
 - 4.4 Updated Results of Survey of Coronavirus Effects on Regional Transit Providers Thomas Gray, H-GAC
 - 4.5 Fort Bend County SitSafe Campaign Tom Kuczynski, Fort Bend County Transit
 - 4.6 Summary of Public Comments for the Congestion Management Process Update Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC
 - 4.7 Timeline for 2021 TAC Member and TAC Subcommittee Nominations and Elections
 Jamila Owens, H-GAC
 - 4.8 Regional Fare Update Thomas Gray, H-GAC
- 5. Agency Reports (5 minutes or less each)

Next RTC Subcommittee Quarterly Meeting: April 8, 2021

REGIONAL TRANSIT COORDINATION SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 8, 2020 – 9:30am – 11:00am Houston-Galveston Area Council Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT

Perri D'Armond – Fort Bend County Transit (Chair)

Vernon Chambers – Harris County Transit

Sarah Coulter – The Woodlands Township (Vice Chair)

Claudia Wicks – Colorado Valley Transit

Ted Ross - Connect Transit

Monique Johnson - City of Sugar Land

Sharon Moses-Burnside - City of Houston

Dave Lewis - Harris County Veterans' Services

Jason Jones – Houston Center for Independent Living

Elijah Williams - Energy Corridor District

Ashley Johnson – LINK Houston

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Rachel Die – METRO

Shawn Johnson – City of Conroe

Paula Johnson – City of Houston Health Department

OTHERS PRESENT

Brenda Bustillos – TxDOT
Travis Madison – TxDOT
Darla Walton – TxDOT
Stephanie Broaddus – TxDOT
Paula Haley-Polk – TxDOT
Kimberly Judge – City of Dayton
Colin Keller – Golden Crescent RPC
Janis Scott – LINK Houston
(Plus other unidentified listeners)

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT

Jamila Owens
Thomas Gray
Alan Rodenstein
Christopher Whaley
Susan Jaworksi
Adam Beckom
Vishu Lingala
Patrick Mandapaka
Lucinda Martinez

BRIEFING

Overview

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the need to maintain social distance, RTCS Members and Alternates met virtually by teleconference. The Subcommittee received updates on a variety of topics, including Public Transit Agency Safety Plans, the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan (RCTP), the Congestion Management Process (CMP), proposed revisions to Transportation Development Credits, Project Prioritization for the next TIP Call for Projects, the proposed Regional Fare System, and the ongoing monthly survey of the pandemic's effect on regional transit providers. Other topics included the Mobility Links initiative, an Automated Vehicle (AV) pilot project that operated on the campus of Texas Southern University, and the #SitSafe campaign aimed at encouraging people to return to using transit.

INTRODUCTIONS AND CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM

ITEM 1 – Ms. Perri D'Armond, Chair, Fort Bend County Transit, convened the meeting at 9:32 AM. Roll was called by H-GAC staff and quorum was certified.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ITEM 2 – There were no public comments presented to the Subcommittee.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3.1 - Adoption of Agenda

Ms. D'Armond requested a motion to adopt the agenda.

Action Item Motion: moved by Vernon Chambers, seconded by Sarah Coulter. Action Item Approved.

ITEM 3.2 – Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. D'Armond requested a motion to approve the summary of the July 9, 2020 Subcommittee meeting. *Action Item Motion: moved by Vernon Chambers, seconded by Sharon Moses-Burnside. Action Item Approved.*

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 4.1 – Transit Asset Management Update/Public Transit Agency Safety Plan – Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC

Mr. Alan Rodenstein updated the Subcommittee regarding Public Transit Agency Safety Plans, which are due by December 13, 2020. There were no questions or comments.

ITEM 4.2 – Texas Southern University Automated Vehicle Pilot – Thomas Gray, H-GAC

Mr. Thomas Gray presented information about the Texas Southern University Automated Vehicle pilot project, which was a joint effort of TSU, H-GAC and METRO and which operated along the Tiger Walk pedestrian promenade on the TSU campus between June 2019 and February 2020.

Discussion followed the presentation, particularly in respect to the proposed "Phase II" extension of the AV shuttle from the TSU campus to the UH campus and the Purple Line LRT station adjacent to TDECU Stadium. Right now, that project is on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

ITEM 4.3 – Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan (RCTP) Update – Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC

Mr. Rodenstein provided a status update to the Subcommittee regarding the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan (RCTP) update process. At its July 20, 2020 meeting, the Texas Transportation Commission awarded a \$100,000 grant for completion of the plan update. Mr. Rodenstein also discussed the role of the RCTP Steering Committee, which is expected to have its first meeting in November. There were no questions or comments.

ITEM 4.4 - Congestion Management Process Update - Alan Rodenstein, H-GAC

Mr. Rodenstein presented the Subcommittee with information about the Congestion Management Process (CMP) 2020 Update, including its purpose, its key elements, and its upcoming schedule.

Brief discussion followed the presentation. Perri D'Armond asked when the public meeting for the CMP process was going to be held; it is currently scheduled for December 3. Sharon Moses- Burnside inquired as to coordination between H-GAC's CMP efforts and similar ongoing efforts by the City of Houston.

ITEM 4.5 – Mobility Links Update – Chris Whaley, H-GAC

Mr. Chris Whaley provided the Subcommittee with an update about the Mobility Links program, which is intended as a "one call/one click" resource to access mobility services. Mr. Whaley discussed the program's schedule, website traffic trends, and future outreach plans, and reminded Subcommittee members of the upcoming Mobility Links Workgroup meeting, scheduled for October 15.

Discussion followed the presentation. Vernon Chambers invited additional participants to attend the October 15 Workgroup meeting. Paula Johnson asked about additional participants to the program, including AAA. Sharon Moses-Burnside asked about a potential role for the City of Houston in the program. Brenda Bustillos suggested integration and coordination with TxDOT's ConnectSmart platform.

ITEM 4.6 – Regional Fare System Update – Thomas Gray, H-GAC

Mr. Gray provided an update on the Regional Fare project. METRO and H-GAC are still working on agreement on the language in the Interlocal Agreement between the two agencies. Actions regarding the Memorandum of Understanding between all participating agencies and a related workgroup are on hold until the ILA is finalized. There were no questions or comments.

ITEM 4.7 - Proposed Revisions to Transportation Development Credits Update - Adam Beckom, H-GAC

Mr. Adam Beckom provided an update about efforts to revise the TPC's policy regarding the use of Transportation Development Credits (TDCs). The proposed revisions were presented to the TIP Subcommittee the day before, and will be presented to TAC as an information item next week.

Perri D'Armond suggested that Subcommittee members contact Mr. Beckom directly if they have any questions or comments about the proposed revisions.

ITEM 4.8 - TIP Subcommittee Project Prioritization Workgroup Update - Vishu Lingala, H-GAC

Mr. Vishu Lingala presented the Subcommittee with updated information about the development of new project evaluation criteria. There were no questions or comments.

ITEM 4.9 – Updated Results of Survey of Coronavirus Effects on Regional Transit Providers – Thomas Gray, H-GAC

Mr. Gray presented the results (through August 2020) of the survey, which most of the region's transportation providers have participated in. The survey continues to track changes in ridership brought on by the pandemic as well as changes in service and other mitigation measures providers have implemented in response. The survey will be sent to providers on a monthly basis over the course of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Perri D'Armond mentioned that Fort Bend County Commissioner's Court has reduced the county's COVID-19 threat level from "Orange" to "Yellow."

ITEM 4.10 – #SitSafe Campaign – Sarah Coulter, The Woodlands Township

Ms. Sarah Coulter presented information about the #SitSafe campaign, a region-wide initiative aimed at encouraging people to resume using public transportation. Key components of the initiative are collaboration between transit agencies, educating passengers about the safety measures agencies are undertaking, and increasing passengers' trust in agencies' abilities to safely operate service.

Vernon Chambers thanked Ms. Coulter and /The Woodlands township for taking the initiative to prepare the #SitSafe campaign.

AGENCY REPORTS

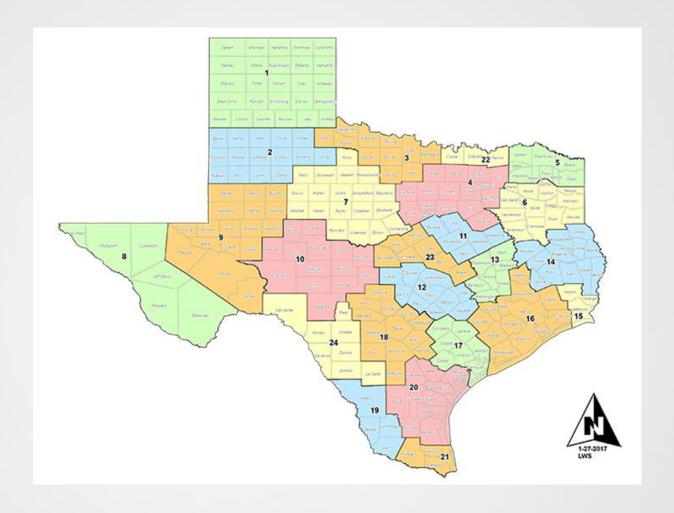
ITEM 5 – Ms. D'Armond invited Subcommittee members to briefly give updates on their agency efforts. Updates were provided by Conroe and the Houston Center for Independent Living.

Ms. D'Armond adjourned the meeting at 11:08 AM.

Next RTCS Quarterly Meeting – January 14, 2021 (Tentative) H-GAC, 2nd Floor, Conference Room B/C

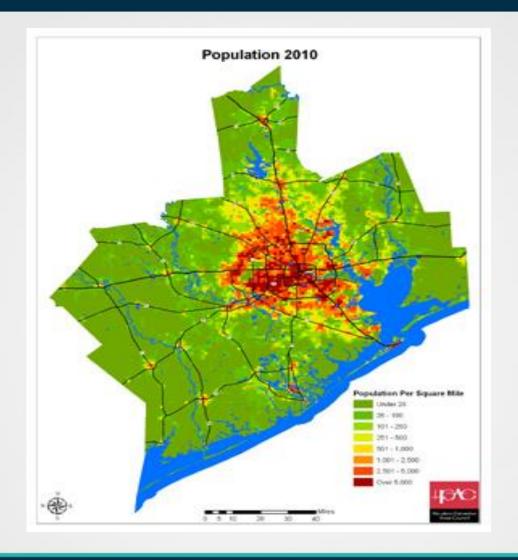


24 State Coordination Districts





"MPO Eight" (UPWP) plus five rural counties





H-GAC Gulf Coast - Region 16 Background

- First report in 2006
- Major accomplishment Harris County Rides
- Updates in 2011 and 2016
- Working toward common fare
- Mobility Links
- 2022 Update first by new staff
- Huntsville Public Transit Study
- Emphasis on addressing transit and coordination gaps
- Expanding public engagement



Project Scope Overview

- Kickoff Goals and Objectives
- II. Inventory of Providers
- III. Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- IV. Public Outreach
- V. Focus Groups and Surveys
- VI. Gap Analysis
- VII. Financial Analysis
- VIII. Public Outreach II
- IX. Final Report Approval by RTC, TAC and TPC



Next Steps

- Start RCTP Steering Group January 7
- Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee –January 14
- Start Comprehensive Needs Assessment late January
- Prepare for Public Meetings, Surveys and Focus Groups
- Final Report due February 2022

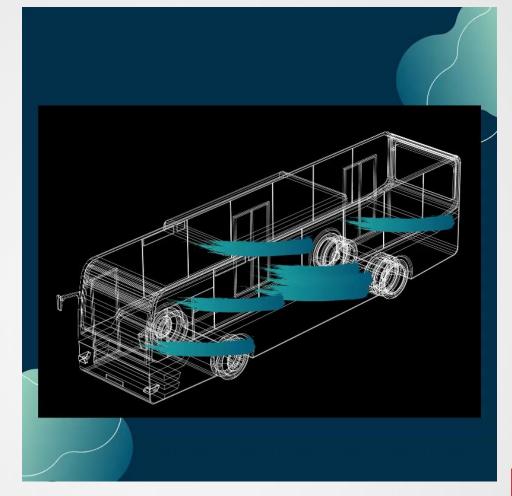




What is GTFS?



General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) is a data specification that allows transit agencies to publish transit data in a format that can be consumed by a wide variety of software applications.



What is GTFS?



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Why GTFS?











Help increase ridership numbers

Allow riders to plan out trips easily

Accessibility to be shared across different platforms

Create uniformity between all local transit agencies for regional fares



Components of GTFS



Required files

- Agency.txt
- Stops.txt
- Routes.txt
- Stop Times.txt
- Calendar.txt

Optional files

- Calendar Dates.txt
- Fare Attributes.txt
- Fare Rules.txt
- Frequencies.txt
- Shapes.txt
- Transfers.txt
- Trips.txt



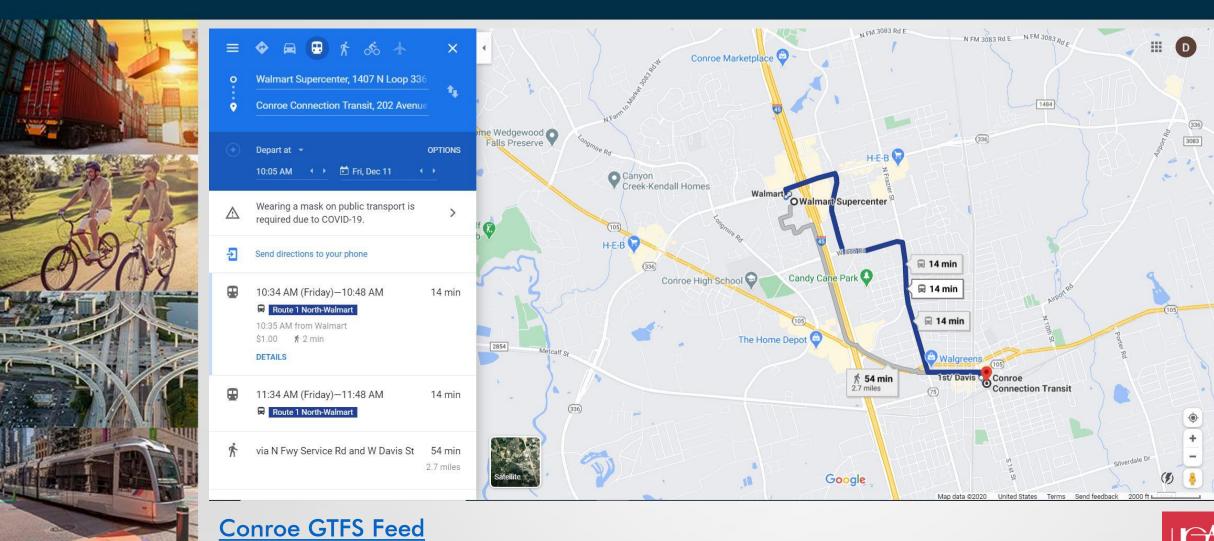
Current Status of Feeds



Agency	Status
Conroe Transit	Active on Google Maps
Harris County Transit	Editing feed for upload to Google
Brazos Transit District	Editing feed for upload to Google
Colorado Valley Transit	On hold
Galveston Island Transit	On Hold
The Woodlands Township Transit	On Hold



City of Conroe Example



Contact Info



- Donte Green GIS Specialist
 - Phone 713-993-4563
 - Email <u>donte.green@h-gac.com</u>
- Chris Whaley Planner Specialist
 - Phone 713-993-2439
 - Email <u>Christopher.Whaley@h-gac.com</u>

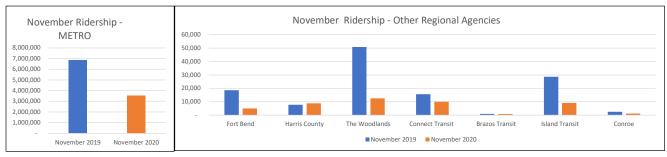


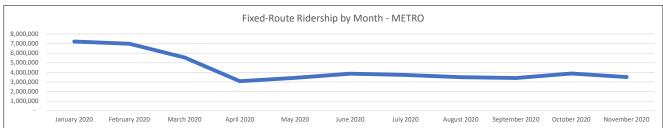
Monthly Ridership - Fixed Route Service

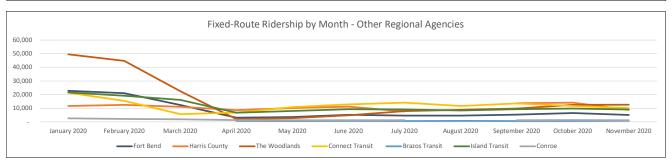
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Agency	METRO	Fort Bend	Harris County	The Woodlands	Connect Transit	Brazos Transit	Island Transit	Conroe		Regional Total
March 2019	7,422,367	21,777	10,066	45,359	22,002	n/a	32,283		2,833	7,556,687
April 2019	7,277,922	22,747	9,453	48,222	16,145	987	31,842		2,801	7,410,119
May 2019	7,236,600	14,122	9,375	47,509	18,400	1,122	33,682		2,911	7,363,721
June 2019	6,773,260	21,290	n/a	44,083	17,849	1,149	36,260		2,620	6,896,511
July 2019	7,230,089	23,824	9,609	64,771	22,612	1,112	41,536		2,961	7,396,514
August 2019	7,560,461	24,209	n/a	61,423	14,389	888	39,214	n/a		7,700,584
September 2019	7,109,414	22,120	8,188	53,352	17,251	888	27,913		2,559	7,241,685
October 2019	8,014,205	17,211	10,584	61,331	21,130	1,161	31,500		3,011	8,160,133
November 2019	6,870,732	18,582	7,672	50,779	15,573	894	28,664		2,451	6,995,347
January 2020	7,228,884	22,844	11,633	49,486	21,398		21,648		2,587	7,358,480
February 2020	6,989,217	21,057	12,481	44,780	15,432		19,210		2,119	7,104,296
March 2020	5,557,130	12,290	11,103	22,462	5,638		16,107		1,928	5,626,658
April 2020	3,078,548	3,111	8,629	2,029	6,891	718	6,770		1,373	3,108,069
May 2020	3,436,532	3,537	10,132	2,760	10,842	677	8,050		1,174	3,473,704
June 2020	3,858,757	5,238	11,205	4,857	12,803	772	9,253		1,248	3,904,133
July 2020	3,732,214	4,587	7,712	7,872	14,114	689	9,115		1,231	3,777,534
August 2020	3,505,987	4,557		8,833	11,672	734	8,380			3,540,163
September 2020	3,423,600	5,309	13,689	9,695	13,453	618	9,224		1,237	3,476,825
October 2020	3,886,668	6,429	14,162	12,453	11,720	684	9,698		1,335	3,943,149
November 2020	3,512,012	5,002	8,852	12,560	10,044	843	9,082		1,149	3,559,544
Change ¹	51.1%	26.9%	115.4%	24.7%	64.5%	94.3%	31.7%	,	46.9%	50.9%

1. November 2020 ridership as percentage of November 2019 ridership



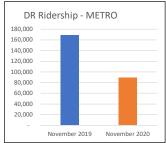




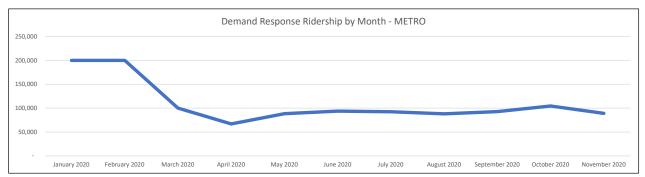
Monthly Ridership - Demand Response & ADA Paratransit Service

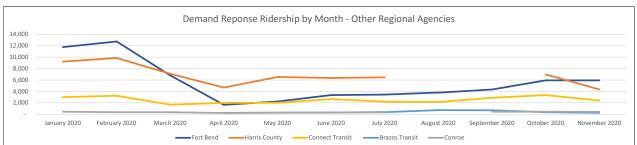
Agency ¹	METRO ²	Fort Bend	Harris County	The Woodlands ³	Connect Transit	Brazos Transit	Island Transit ³	Conroe		Regional Total
March 2019	200,000	11,248	8,284	n/a	3,007	n/a	n/a		360	222,899
April 2019	178,662	11,562	8,324	n/a	2,010	253	n/a		395	201,206
May 2019	179,395	11,535	8,190	n/a	2,454	224	n/a		519	202,317
June 2019	173,516	8,103	8,483	n/a	2,424	240	n/a		366	193,132
July 2019	181,328	11,829	9,811	n/a	2,271	480	n/a		392	206,111
August 2019	185,939	12,324	n/a	n/a	2,322	958	n/a	n/a		201,543
September 2019	167,000	10,078	9,023	n/a	1,946	620	n/a		362	189,029
October 2019	195,692	9,390	13,410	n/a	2,597	578	n/a		420	222,087
November 2019	169,304	9,860	7,019	n/a	2,435	380	n/a		395	189,393
January 2020	200,000	11,765	9,226	n/a	2,998		n/a		430	224,419
February 2020	200,000	12,767	9,868	n/a	3,254		n/a		355	226,244
March 2020	100,000	6,795	7,085	n/a	1,675		n/a		357	115,912
April 2020	66,908	1,640	4,675	n/a	1,975	251	n/a		225	75,674
May 2020	88,650	2,250	6,530	n/a	2,001	267	n/a		270	99,968
June 2020	93,783	3,346	6,352	n/a	2,648	310	n/a		324	106,763
July 2020	92,519	3,438	6,476	n/a	2,214	378	n/a		337	105,362
August 2020	88,305	3,788		n/a	2,144	711	n/a			94,948
September 2020	93,000	4,330		n/a	2,879	696	n/a		428	101,333
October 2020	104,515	5,927	6,970	n/a	3,364	359	n/a		446	121,581
November 2020	89,224	5,927	4,340	n/a	2,396	247	n/a		426	102,560
Change ⁴	52.7%	60.1%	61.8%	n/a	98.4%	65.0%	n/a	10	7.8%	54.2%

- 1. The following providers did not respond to the November 2020 survey: Colorado Valley Transit
- Staff estimates or METRO monthly Board Report figures
 Service not provided (The Woodlands and Island Transit contract with other parties for ADA Paratransit service)
- 4. November 2020 ridership as percentage of November 2019 ridership









Changes in Service in Response to Coronavirus Pandemic

	METRO	Fort Bend	Harris County	The Woodlands	Connect Transit	Brazos Transit	Island Transit	Conroe
When the pandemic began (March 2020), did your agency curtail or limit service (for example, eliminating routes, reducing frequencies, or reducing service hours) in response to changing ridership patterns caused by the epidemic?	YES	YES	YES ¹	YES			YES	YES ¹
What determining factor(s) did your agency use in deciding to reduce or eliminate services? (Check all that apply)								
Actual or anticipated decline in ridership	YES	YES	YES	YES				YES
Request from authorities to reduce services to limit public movement/interaction				YES			YES	
Shortage of operator labor (e.g. due to more employees staying home to take care of family, etc.)	YES							
Shortage of available vehicles (e.g. due to increased cleaning and sanitizing requirements)								
Desire to limit operator interaction with public (to reduce potential of infection)	YES							YES
When the pandemic began (March 2020), did your agency implement or expand any specific services (for example, new routes to, or increased frequencies on services to, medical facilities) in response to changing ridership patterns caused by the epidemic?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES ²			YES
In November 2020, did your agency make any additional service modifications (for example, eliminating or adding back routes, adjusting frequencies, or adjusting service hours) in response to changing ridership patterns or other factors caused by the epidemic? ³	1						YES	
If your agency made any service modifications during November 2020, what determining factor(s) did your agency use in deciding to make those adjustments? (Check all that apply)	<u>'</u>							
Actual or anticipated changes in ridership								
Financial/budgetary concerns	YES						YES	
Request from authorities to reduce services to limit public movement/interaction								
Request from authorities to increase services to stimulate economy/return to normal Overcrowding or inability to maintain social distancing on certain routes							YES	
Request from authorities or other stakeholders to increase services to medical or social service facilities								
Desire to limit operator interaction with public (to reduce potential of infection)								
Shortage of available vehicles (e.g. due to increased cleaning and sanitizing requirements)								
Other								
During the month of November 2020, did your agency collaborate with any outside agency, non-profit or other								
business to provide additional service during the Coronavirus epidemic? If so, please describe the partnership and	YES							
service. ⁴								

^{1.} Park and ride service only; local fixed and DR service continues as normal

METRO implemented a service change on Sunday, November 8, 2020 that reduced service levels to meet the FY2021 Business Plan and Budget.

Island Transit reopened 6 of 7 scheduled fixed routes (six days a week instead of 7 days, and reduced hours to 6am-7pm).

4. Specific reponses to this question:

METRO partnered to provide food to families.

^{2.} Connect Transit did not add fixed-route service but did provide on-call vehicles to ensure proper social distancing would be adhered to without leaving riders at a stop to wait for the next scheduled bus.

^{3.} Specific responses to this question:

Mitigation Measures Taken to Reduce Spread of Coronavirus

	METRO	Fort Bend	Harris County	The Woodlands	Connect Transit	Brazos Transit	Island Transit	Conroe
What specific measures has your agency taken to reduce the spread of Coronavirus? Check all that apply:								
Temporarily suspended fare collection			YES					
Required bus boarding by rear doors only					YES			
Taped off seats on buses to ensure social distancing for passengers	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Enforced lower capacity restrictions (e.g. "half-full") on buses and vans	YES	YES		YES	YES			
Trained employees on proper hygiene and social distancing techniques	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES
Required operators to wear Personal Protective Equipment, such as masks and gloves	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Provided information about proper hygiene and social distancing techniques to patrons (e.g. signs or flyers on buses)	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Enhanced and/or more frequent cleaning/disinfection of buses and vans	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Required passengers to wear masks or face coverings while riding	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Enhanced and/or more frequent cleaning/disinfection of passenger facilities (bus stops, park and rides, light rail stations, etc.)	YES		YES		YES			
Installed plastic shields to separate operators from riders	YES		YES		YES	YES	YES	YES
Other (please specify) ¹					YES			
In November 2020, did your agency make any changes to its Coronavirus reduction measures (e.g. resume fare collection, add or eliminate barriers between drivers and							YES	
passengers, change vehicle capacity limits, etc.)? If so, please briefly explain: ²								

^{1.} Specific responses to this question:

Connect Transit: opened windows on vehicles to bring fresh air into buses

Island Transit: eliminated some barriers to allow 75% capacity

^{2.} Specific responses to this question:



CMP Background

- Required by Federal Highway Administration
- Original written in 2007; updates in 2013 and 2015
- Based on objectives of Regional Transportation Plan
- Develops metrics and identifies problems
- Will be used for added capacity projects



Defining the CMP Process

Three key elements:

- Identify congestion and its causes (in region)
- Apply variety of mitigation strategies to improve system
- Evaluate strategies' effectiveness and adjust accordingly



Public Comment Process

45-day public comment period started on November 22

 115+ comments received from groups and individuals posted on website

Bike – Ped Subcommittee was very active commentator



Comment Summary

- Generally supportive towards overall approach of CMP
- Many comments emphasizing increasing role of active transportation
- Additional comments encouraging greater emphasis on multimodal solutions
- All comments will be addressed as we work to finalize the document



Next Steps

2021

- Review of Public Comment and Update Report January
- Recommendation and Approval by TAC and TPC February
- Submission to TxDOT and Federal Highway Administration Spring



For More Information

Contact: Alan Rodenstein

alan.rodenstein@h-gac.com

Review the Congestion Mitigation Process Draft Report and comments refer to:

http://h-gac.com/congestion-management/documents/congestion-management-process-draft.pdf

