

7. CRITERIA FOR SUBREGIONAL PLANNING REQUESTS

BACKGROUND

Subregional Planning is a partnership between H-GAC and local public entities located within the eight-county region of the H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Organization. These planning efforts are unique because H-GAC assists local governments and agencies in performing mobility studies that focus on local transportation networks and ensure they align with the regional transportation network. Subregional Planning serves as a pipeline for including projects that have been through a formal local public participation process in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and eventually the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Over the past few years, H-GAC has received a significant increase in requests from local partners to perform mobility studies, including, but not limited to developing and/or updating mobility plans, thoroughfare plans, and corridor studies. The purpose of this policy is to establish a process for evaluating and prioritizing subregional planning requests to be programmed into the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

CURRENT SITUATION

H-GAC staff has developed draft Criteria for Subregional Planning Requests that will be used to evaluate and prioritize submittals during the 2026 Call for Subregional Planning Requests. The draft Criteria for Subregional Planning Requests, attached as Figure 1 below, establishes the eligibility of local sponsors, scope of work, timeline for completion, and evaluation criteria. It also defines plan/study types, describes the approval process, and a process to track implementation.

The 2026-2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) includes the following subregional planning activities:

1. Friendswood Parkway Corridor Study
2. Buffalo Bayou East Concept Study
3. Friendswood Active Transportation Plan
4. Liberty County Thoroughfare Plan
5. Montgomery County Mobility Plan
6. North Houston Communities Transportation Priorities Plan
7. Waller County Thoroughfare Plan Update
8. City of Needville Mobility Plan
9. Galveston County Thoroughfare Plan
10. Liberty County Mobility Plan Update
11. Waller County Mobility Plan Update

The 2026 Call for Subregional Planning Requests will be used to solicit and prioritize subregional planning activities to be included in the 2028-2029 UPWP. Additional information about the Subregional Planning Program, including the interactive Subregional Planning Area Map and the Subregional Planning Recommendations Dashboard is available on H-GAC's website at <https://www.h-gac.com/subregional-planning>.

ACTION REQUESTED

Discussion only.

Figure 1: Draft Criteria for Subregional Planning Requests

DRAFT Criteria for Subregional Planning Requests

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Goals & Objectives

The goal for creating criteria for subregional planning efforts is to provide guidance for H-GAC staff when prioritizing requests received from local sponsors. Study objectives should align with the latest RTP Goals ([Project Development Process | Houston-Galveston Area Council \(H-GAC\)](#)).

Eligibility

- Political entities with jurisdiction within the region, such as municipalities, counties, transit agencies, school districts, etc.
- Must be a study or plan, will not develop signed engineering work.
- Requests must have the ability to be completed within two (2) years.

Requests & Approval

H-GAC will have up to one (1) call per year for subregional requests for consideration in the UPWP. Priority will be given to requests that best meet the Evaluation Criteria and then in the order the request was received. All requests are subject to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Transportation Policy Council (TPC) review and approval for inclusion in the UPWP.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be utilized to evaluate and prioritize Subregional Planning requests:

1. Are there other plans or studies (sponsored by H-GAC, a local agency, etc.) within the study area that have been completed within the last five years? Priority may be given to areas that have not been studied within the last five years compared to areas with recent studies.
2. Is there a need to update an existing plan, or develop a new plan? Ex. Priority may be given to creating new Thoroughfare Plans compared to updating existing Thoroughfare Plans.
3. Is the area experiencing, has had, or projected to experience high growth? This could be a corridor connecting high growth areas with increased activity, or an area surrounded by other areas experiencing high growth. Local development documents such as plats, site plans, or permits may be used to determine areas that are anticipated to experience high growth.
4. Are there Regionally Significant Roadways within the study area?
5. Are there Regional Critical Urban Freight Corridors as defined by the [Regional Goods Movement Plan](#) within the study area?
6. Does the study area include a corridor identified on the Congestion Management Plan network or one of the [Top 100 Congested Road Segments](#) identified in Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) Urban Mobility Report?

7. Is there funding allocated towards the plan/study or other phases of the project? This could be local, state, or federal funds. Corridor projects that have federal funds allocated may be recommended to move forward with the environmental phase as part of the NEPA planning process.

Subregional Planning Request Types

Study: Focuses on mobility issues in a targeted area by outlining and analyzing alternatives to achieve mobility goals within the targeted area. Public participation may include residents, businesses, or other stakeholders that are directly impacted by a potential project. Does not typically result in official adoption or approval by a governing body but may result in concurrence.

Plan: Intended to be comprehensive and identifies the long-term vision and provides short, mid, and long-term recommendations such as projects, programs, and policies typically derived from one or multiple studies, either done previously or conducted as part of the Plan's development. Public participation is typically broader and may include residents, businesses, or other stakeholders within the entire study area. May result in official, adoption, approval, or concurrence by a governing body.

Mobility Plan

- Could be single or multiple modes, such as freight, transit, ped/bike, urban air mobility, autonomous vehicles, etc.
- Includes vision and goal statements, and performance measures.
- Can include developing and analyzing alternatives or multiple scenarios to decide on the ultimate scenario that best meets mobility goals (Plan recommendations are typically based on the ultimate scenario)
- Typically includes project, program, and policy recommendations.
- Can also include recommendations for thoroughfare plan updates, multimodal mobility studies, transit studies, feasibility studies, and corridor studies for specific areas.
- 18 – 24 months from contract approval, depending on whether the scope of work is an update to an existing plan or developing a new plan.

Thoroughfare Plan

- Countywide or Citywide
- Long-range (25+ years)
- Includes specific recommendations, such as right-of-way (ROW), connectivity, street classification, etc.
- Usually requires a formal approval process by the sponsor.
- 12 months from contract approval

Corridor Study

- Could be single or multiple modes, such as freight, transit, ped/bike, marine, etc.
- Subarea within a county, county precinct, or city.
- Includes alternatives or multiple scenarios, such as roadway alignments and potential land uses.
- Could include access management.

- 12 – 18 months from contract approval depending on length of corridor and level of detail for corridor analysis.

Feasibility Study

- Could be single or multiple modes, such as freight, transit, ped/bike, urban air mobility, autonomous vehicles, etc.
- Can include developing and analyzing alternatives or multiple scenarios to determine the feasibility of a project that best meets mobility goals
- 12 months from contract approval, depending on the approval process

Other

- Any other planning requests that may not fit into any of the above categories. Examples may include, but are not limited to, traffic studies, intersection studies, safe routes to school, or other specific transportation topics.

Implementation Reporting

Local sponsors are required to submit annual implementation reports to H-GAC for up to five years following plan or study completion. The implementation reports will also allow H-GAC to make updates to the Subregional Planning Recommendations Database and track the impact subregional planning efforts have on improving mobility throughout the region.