

## H-GAC 2018 TIP Call for Projects

### Houston Parks and Recreation Department / Houston Parks Board Application Port Regional Connector Greenway

#### Planning Factors Narrative and Planning Coordination

*October 26, 2018*

#### 7. Planning Factors - Barrier Elimination (Active Transportation) (Max 20 Points)

1. Does the proposed facility provide safe and convenient routes across barriers such as freeways, railroads, and waterways?

The proposed connector provides safe and convenient routes across major barriers in this area of Houston including bayous, highways and railroad crossings. At the north end, the proposal provides a pedestrian bridge over Buffalo Bayou to reach the Denver Harbor neighborhood and Port of Houston area. At the south end, it provides a pedestrian bridge over Sims Bayou to link to the Hobby airport area.

Other major barriers include the highways I-610 and I-45. The greenway provides crossing markings, signage and beacons to make safe pedestrian routes underneath the large freeways. The Port area is also crossed by active railroad lines. The proposed Port Greenway Connector facilitates pedestrian crossing by providing a greenway segment in the 75<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way to pass under the existing rail bridge. Additional safety facilities are planned in other locations where at-grade rail crossings exist on street ROW.

Once in Mason Park, the greenway uses existing trails and the newly constructed Mason Park Bridge to cross Brays Bayou and connect to the Brays Bayou Greenway. The project also completes a segment of the Brays Bayou Greenway that crosses underneath the rail line, providing a safe crossing of this barrier.

The neighborhoods along the route, such as Harrisburg/Manchester, also have minor barriers. There are streets that lack adequate pedestrian infrastructure or connections that inhibit pedestrian circulation. The proposal provides pedestrian infrastructure along Navigation Boulevard to make it a safe, direct route from Downtown to Buffalo Bayou Park East, the Second Ward and Magnolia Park neighborhoods. The proposal upgrades 75<sup>th</sup> Street into a multi-modal, on-street greenway that links the existing Sunset Trail to Mason Park.

Currently, there is no primary pedestrian bicycle corridor from the Sims Bayou Greenway to Hobby Airport. Neighborhoods along Sims Bayou have limited access to Hobby Airport, blocked by several major thoroughfares such as Bellfort Street and Airport Boulevard. A new Greenway along a Harris County Flood Control District right-of-way can potentially overcome these barriers. Additional community input is needed to finalize this route. In another instance, the greenway connects the Harrisburg/Manchester neighborhood to John R. Harris Park and Sims

Bayou Greenway by making several safe thoroughfare crossings including the La Porte Freeway at the Broadway Street intersection.

2. Does the proposed bicycle/pedestrian facility close a gap in the existing bicycle network that aligns with a regional bikeway?

*Narrative, MAP: overview*

The Port Regional Connector closes gaps by upgrading indirect shared on-street projects through Magnolia Park with an in-ROW greenway linking Mason Park to the Harrisburg and Sunset Rail Trail and Hidalgo Park. Further, the Port Regional Connector fulfills two Future “Key Connections” (also overlapping with long-term segments) identified in the *Houston Bike Plan* (2017). The first “Key Connection” runs from John R. Harris Park down Broadway Street, turning south on Galveston Road and running to Sims Bayou and beyond. The second “Key Connection” runs from the future Houston Botanical Garden along Sims Bayou, turning south to reach Hobby Airport.

#### **8. Planning Factors - Expands or Improves Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity to Employment/Schools/Medical Facilities/Transit Stops/Other Points of Interest (Max 50 Points)**

1. Does the facility directly connect to or within 1/4 mile of employment?

*Narrative, MAP*

The proposal increases access to employment within ¼ mile walking distance through three strategies. The first is to connect to existing pedestrian greenway infrastructure to provide access to the Port of Houston, Downtown Houston and Hobby Airport.

The second strategy connects pedestrians directly and within ¼ mile walking to commercial corridors. These commercial corridors include Navigation Boulevard, Harrisburg Boulevard, Belfort Street and Broadway Street.

The third strategy is to connect to transit centers and high frequency transit options that connect to regional employment opportunities. These include the Hobby Airport Transit Center and Magnolia Transit Center (via existing trail network through Gus Wortham Golf Course).

2. Does the facility directly connect to or within 1/4 mile of a school or university?

*Narrative, MAP*

The proposal connects to 8 Houston ISD schools and 2 Promise Community Schools within ¼ mile walking distance: Burnet Elementary, Davila Elementary, De Zavala Elementary, Edison Middle School, Franklin Elementary, Gallegos Elementary, Lorenzo Early Childhood Center, Milby High School, Ripley House Charter School, Ripley House Middle Campus.

Davila, Franklin and Gallegos Elementary Schools are also a part of Houston’s SPARK park program, offering surrounding residents’ access to play and field space outside of school hours.

3. Does the facility directly connect to or within 1/4 mile of medical facility?

*Narrative, MAP*

At the north end, the proposal is within ¼ mile of Texas Children’s Pediatrics Ripley House located on Navigation Boulevard, and the East End Medical Clinic on Wayside Drive. At the south end, the Memorial Hermann Medical Group located on the Gulf Freeway is within ¼ mile of the greenway.

4. Does the facility directly connect to or within 1/4 mile of Transit Center or Transit Stop?

*Narrative, MAP*

The project connects directly to the Hobby Airport Transit Center. The proposed greenway provides ¼ mile access to a total of 62 bus stops which enable access to the following 8 local bus routes: 20 Canal Memorial, 28 OST Wayside, 40 Telephone Heights, 50 Broadway, 73 Bellfort, 76 Evergreen, 80 MLK Lockwood, and 88 Sagemont.

Additionally, the Magnolia Transit Center is within ½ mile of the new greenway along 75<sup>th</sup> street, enabling bicycle access to the transit center from the trail.

5. Does the facility directly connect to or within 1/4 mile of other points of interest?

*Narrative – shopping / restaurant, parks, community centers, churches, museums, banks, grocery stores etc?*

The proposed greenway provides direct access to the following 10 parks; Brays Bayou Park, De Zavalla Park, Glenbrook Park, Gus Wortham Golf Course, Hidalgo Park, John R. Harris Park, Mason Park, Milby Park and Pineview Triangle. It also enables direct access to the future Houston Arboretum, and the Buffalo Bayou Park East developments. Furthermore, the proposed greenway provides direct access Brays and Sims Bayou Greenways, which provide access to multiple amenities.

De Zavalla Park also contains the De Zavalla community center containing a pool and club house. Mason Park also has a community center which offers a playground, lighted tennis courts and sports fields, swimming pool, indoor gym, weight room and meeting rooms.

The project also provides ¼ mile access to close to 12 places of community worship, and multiple local restaurants, grocery stores and banks.

The Sam Houston Board Tour leaves from the Port of Houston Turning Basin within ¼ mile of the north end of our project. Our projects’ new bridge over Buffalo Bayou provides pedestrian and bicyclist access to that amenity from the communities to the south.

### **Planning Factors - Planning Coordination (Max 10 Points)**

1. Is the proposed project recommended in a regional/sub regional/or locally adopted plan including regional thoroughfare plans? Or Has the sponsor conducted interagency coordination with other local or state agency affected by the proposed project?

The Port Regional Connector Greenway was identified in the *Beyond the Bayous* study conducted by the Houston Parks Board with a generous grant from Houston Endowment. It is also part of the *Beyond the Bayous Regional Connector Network of Greenways* that is being submitted by the Houston Parks Board for the H-GAC 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.

Portions of the connector were also identified in other plans including: the *Hobby Area Livable Centers Study*, the *Buffalo Bayou East Master Plan*, and the *Houston Bike Plan*.

The Houston Parks Board has begun coordination of the project with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the Port of Houston Authority, the Hobby Area Management District, the East End Management District, and TIRZ 8. Letters of support from these organizations are all included with this application.

### **Planning Factors - Emissions Reductions (Kgs/Day) (Max 10 Points)**

1. Please provide the air quality improvements (estimated NOX kgs/day) the proposed facility provides.
2. Please provide the air quality improvements (estimated VOCs kgs/day) the proposed facility provides.

*Template*

### **Planning Factors - Environmental Justice (Max 10 Points)**

1. Is the proposed project located in or is adjoining an environmental justice sensitive area (census block groups) identified by HGAC?

*Maps: environmental justice sensitive areas*

The project is located in a number of environmental justice (EJ) sensitive areas as described in the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) "Environmental Justice" report and Executive Order 12898. All census block groups along the proposed route are minority communities. Many census block groups within this area have "secondary" indicators of disadvantage. These include the following factors: high concentrations of senior population, limited English proficiencies or "LEP" population, zero car households, female headed households, and limited educational attainment or "LEA" population. There are also a number of census blocks with disabled populations along the Port Regional Connector Greenway. The map provided shows areas of particularly high concentrations of environmental justice populations by census block group.

The project intends to serve these communities by increasing their access to education, jobs, recreation and transit. It addresses the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) fundamental principles on environmental justice by encouraging healthy environments and

increasing access to social and economic resources from minority and low-income neighborhoods.

2. If Yes, Will the project incorporate measures that reduce, minimize or avoid adverse effects environmental justice sensitive areas (census block groups) identified by HGAC?

*Narrative:*

Locating active transportation projects in environmental justice areas benefits these populations. Instead of providing potential barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists like most traditional roadway projects, they provide additional support and connectivity to resources. The greenways will be ADA-compliant and aide pedestrians seeking an alternative to personal vehicular use. H-GAC's Environmental Justice Report (2017) stated "only 5% of the regional network of pedestrian-bicyclist infrastructure are within EJ (Environmental Justice) zones described as having "high disadvantage." The Port Regional Connector Greenway helps Houston better balance the distribution of pedestrian infrastructure. This enables equitable access to recreation, education and jobs to historically underserved communities.

The project also mitigates impacts caused by past infrastructure projects and the historic lack of investment in pedestrian infrastructure in low-income and minority areas. It overcomes many barriers that have isolated these neighborhoods such as major roads, bayous and railroads by making safe connections across them.

**References:**

*Environmental Justice*, 2017. By Houston-Galveston Area Council.

<http://www.h-gac.com/taq/title-vi/documents/Environmental-justice-HGAC-2017.pdf>

Houston Bike Plan, 2017. City of Houston Planning & Development Department, Department of Public Works & Engineering and Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

<http://houstonbikeplan.org/documents/>

*Beyond the Bayous*, 2017. Houston Parks Board.

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*Hobby Area Livable Centers Study*, 2017. Houston-Galveston Area Council

[http://www.h-gac.com/community/livablecenters/planning-studies/documents/Hobby-Livable-Centers-Study\\_%20March2017.pdf](http://www.h-gac.com/community/livablecenters/planning-studies/documents/Hobby-Livable-Centers-Study_%20March2017.pdf)

*Buffalo Bayou Master Plan*, 2002. Buffalo Bayou Partnership

<http://issuu.com/buffalobayou/docs/bbpmasterplan2002?e=13332866/13696999>