

Minutes Summary
Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee Meeting
Houston-Galveston Area Council
3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor, Conference Room B
Thursday, October 8, 2015
9:30 a.m.

1. **Introductions** – **Vernon Chambers, Chair -- Harris County Transit**
Called to order at 9:35 a.m.

• **Attendees (Present):**

Chris LaRue, The Woodlands Township
Maria Palacios, Houston CIL
Paulette Shelton, Fort Bend County
Darla Walton, TxDOT
Ken Fickes, Harris County
Ellen Seaton, Harris County Community Services
Katrina Bayer, Central Houston
Sharon Lewis, TxDOT
Travis Madison, TxDOT
Roxanne Henry, Harris County Community Services
Steve Atchison, American Red Cross
James Hollis, Gulf Coast Center/Connect Transit
Yvonne Fedee, The Goodman Corp.
Anthony Cochran, TxDOT Beaumont District/Chambers County
Mary Fay, METRO
Ronald Fleming, DARS
Michael Fuller, H-GAC
Kari Hackett, H-GAC
Isaac Perez, H-GAC
David Wurdlow, H-GAC
Rosalind Hebert, H-GAC
Greg Seal, H-GAC
Thomas Gray, H-GAC
Alan Clark, H-GAC
Sean Middleton, H-GAC
Lydia Abebe, H-GAC

• **Attendees (Via Phone):**

Shawn Johnson, City of Conroe
Jim Archer, METRO
Mike Spears, Greater Houston Transp/Yellow Cab
Mary Vasquez, United Way
Perry Hunter, Mounting Horizons, CIL
Chamane Barrow, Brazoria County CIL
Bill Tobin, City of Sugar Land
Janis Scott - Bus Rider

2. **Public Comments** - None

3. **Information Items**

- **Availability of Houston Urbanized Area FY2015 Formula Funds (5307, 5337 and 5339) and Program of Projects Development – Mary Fay, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO)**

Ms. Mary Fay presented information on METRO's upcoming call for projects. She briefly summarized the above-mentioned three programs:

1. 5307 Program (for capital expenditures and some operating expenses);
2. 5337 Program which is a state of good repair (for maintaining fixed guideways like HOVs); 5337 replaced the 5309 Program.
3. 5339 Program (strictly for bus and bus facilities).

METRO Board approved a process for the Call for Projects formula program last year. More info is available on the METRO website. A team will evaluate applications received. H-GAC will assist METRO is sending out an email advertising the Call for Projects.

Question: Who is eligible to receive these funds?

Answer: All transit providers are eligible to receive those funds. Any new transit service will have to come through the application process.

- **The Harris County Transit Program of Projects (POP) for FY 2015**

Ken Fickes provided a handout which consisted of Harris County's request to METRO for 5307 funds for FY15 as a part of their outreach process to present to the subcommittee today. Any questions should be addressed to Ken Fickes.

- **Regional Transit Framework Study Update - Thomas Gray, H-GAC**

Mr. Gray reviewed the history of this Study: The original Study was conducted 2009-2010 and resulted in four regional transit scenarios, but these were never completed or accepted. Over the summer, H-GAC staff met with several transit providers and non-profits to get an idea of current available services. Short term needs, long-term goals, and obstacles were identified. Ideas and scenarios from H-GAC staff were presented and next steps were outlined to re-convene the RTFS Steering Committee, implement an amended expansion plan, introduce a prioritized list of additional projects, and update the study on a regular basis.

- **Regional Google Transit Feed System Information Update - Sean Middleton, H-GAC**

By way of background, this system has been in development for some time but has hit a snag with the contract. The idea for this system was H-GAC's with the intention of creating connectivity with all the transit agencies to the whole region where they could go from the H-GAC website to the Google map system. H-GAC developed all the files and sent them to Google. Even though H-GAC already has an agreement with all the transit agencies, Google was not satisfied. They required every transit agency to sign the contract, but the contracts were not acceptable to all the transit agencies. As it stands today, Google has not gotten back to staff and does not seem to want to work with H-GAC, so the project is stalled.

Mr. Hackett mentioned two ideas that might influence the process. One was that a transit agency willing to sign the standard Google contract as it might do so as a pilot project. Another idea was that in the interim, until these agreements are satisfactory to all the local providers, H-GAC could place links on the METRO central website to all of the transit operators so the general public can access and get information from all the other transit providers in the region.

Mr. Fickes commented that the Harris County attorney's problem with the Google contract was ownership of the data and the issue of participation and the length of that participation.

Ms. Paulette Shelton suggested pursuing alternatives rather than options, one of these being interactive mapping. After some discussion within the subcommittee, it was determined that interactive mapping would not work for the stated purpose.

Mr. Clark suggested if any of the subcommittee are members of APTA (American Public Transportation Association) they could check with them to see if they have had discussions with Google. As our trade association, they would be most effective with Google because they have a lot of working groups and could provide more information.

- **Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan Update - Lydia Abebe, H-GAC**
Ms. Abebe provided an overview of what was accomplished in the past, the current situation, and steps for the next two years. The RCTP began with HB 3588 in 2006. The purpose of this plan is to coordinate with health and human service agencies to expand transit services in the region and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the current regional transit system. The RCTP update is a five-year plan that will cover the 13 counties of the Houston-Galveston Gulf Coast region. It will address state and federal requirements related to transit coordination plans. Next steps involve a request for the RCTP subcommittee to assist with development of this plan (especially transportation resources inventory updates), public outreach and development of a Public Participation Plan, a recommendation for pilot projects, and reports for approval of a final plan. Any questions should be addressed to Mr. Kari Hackett.
- **Attachment C - Draft RCTP Table of Contents** - Distributed at the meeting for information.
- **Agency Reports**
 1. Katrina Bayer (Central Houston) - Observing the effects of METRO's new bus network and working with METRO to engage in outreach to the 10 largest office buildings in downtown Houston.
 2. Paulette Shelton (Fort Bend County) - Route started in Richmond and Rosenberg in July has been a great success with a 39% increase in ridership during July and August. For a one-week period during the Fort Bend County Fair, the use of that route was offered; 105 riders took advantage of that promotion.
 3. Ellen Seaton (Harris County Social Services) - Working very closely with Harris County Transit to continue providing transportation services to homeless families.

4. Roxanne Henry (Harris County Community Services) - Social Service Office on Jensen and Tidwell (Northeast Houston) became nervous when we heard about all the changes to the METRO service routes and that these services would be cut back in northeast section. There were no cutbacks and we now have more frequent stops right in front of our building. Thank you METRO!
5. Mr. Ronald Fleming (DARS) - News is not relevant to issues on the table, but would like to say that legislatively, they have been mandated to merge with the Texas Workforce Commission in September of next year, so that might result in a lot of things moving forward.
6. Maria Palacios (Houston Center for Independent Living) - Even though the HCIL is not a transportation provider, its role serves the unique needs of people with disabilities. Maria is proud of the advocacy efforts of the disability community and is excited about all the changes with METRO's new bus network which now provides buses every 15 minutes.
7. Mary Fay (METRO) - Working on many things. Jim Archer is working on the new bus network launched August 16th and METRO staff is putting in an unbelievable amount of hours. There are more projects in our Capital Plan for next year for more shelters, more sidewalks, and other things to support the new bus network. APTA named METRO for the 2015 Public Transportation Achievement Award. METRO will be sending out emails to announce the Call for Projects for the 5310 program and there is more to come.
9. Charmane Barrow (Brazoria County CIL) - Working with Connect Transit to offer transportation training and in the process of developing curriculum from various resources to provide for the people with disability for the coming year.
10. Janis Scott (Bus Rider) - METRO's new bus network is tremendously improving transportation for many of us. Negative publicity rampant in the beginning came from those who did not participate in the process in the last 3 years and those people are very unhappy. However, all that information was posted online. She does not have a computer but does have lots of different library cards. She is on a green route and can connect to many more routes now than in the past. Continuing to engage with METRO and hoping to have more dialogue with them. Congratulates METRO for receiving the APTA Award.
11. Shawn Johnson (City of Conroe) - Transit service going strong with an average of 130-150 riders a week. Concluded public outreach for 5310 funds and seeking Council approval today for Program of Projects. Looking to awarding those funds to Montgomery County, Senior Rides, Meals on Wheels, and New Danville. Looking forward to purchasing two ADA vans soon and hoping to have before the end of the year to support ADA Transit Services.

11. Alan Clark (H-GAC) - Regarding the eblasts concerning the live streaming of TPC meetings. Directed people to website and YouTube to find archived videos. Interested in receiving helpful feedback. This meeting room will eventually be equipped with permanent cameras, and the possibility of future streaming of other committee meetings via webex format.

12. James Hollis (Gulf Coast Center) - The GCC continues to work on the Fare Card technology and have hit a few bumps in the road on the IT side. The City of Galveston Island Transit helped to provide the bus service and try to work out some of the bumps. H-GAC assisted with funding. Continuing to work on the Kemah Transit Terminal with the Goodman Corp and the Texas City Park and Ride. Kemah seems supportive but elected a new mayor in May, a new Council, and made the decision to put it up for a public vote in November. They have only 1800 residents so there is some concern if that will move forward or if we are just spinning our wheels. It will be in Texas City with our new admin building for Connect Transit and the Texas City Park and Ride right next to it. The City of Texas City put up 8 acres for local match. New building is right off Hwy 146 right off the hurricane evacuation route and will serve a lot of needs.

13. Mr. Steve Atchison (American Red Cross) - Red Cross had a busy year. Had a challenge this summer with the disaster relief operation because we had 300-400 volunteers to get them in and out with our drivers during the day.

14. Mr. ? (Chambers County) - Demand Response Senior Citizen's project is the only one in Chambers County. Previous Director Hope Stanley left recently and the new contact person is yet to be named.

15. Ms. Darla Walton (TxDOT) - TxDOT has a new DBE Reporting Form. There will be two webinar information sessions to guide everyone in filling out that form. All should have received this form in an email blast. If not, contact your local PTC to obtain that information.

16. Travis Madison (TxDOT) - Reminder of two upcoming free training sessions to be held at the Houston District office on Washington and IH 10 designed to assist transit providers:

November 3rd - Financial Management for Transit Operators, 8:00-5:00 p.m.

November 4th - Monitoring and Managing Your Maintenance Program, 8:00-5:00 p.m.

17. Vernon Chambers - Harris County Rides is really growing through coordinated efforts with Montgomery and Brazoria County; up to about 7,000 rides a month; looking at doing an RFP for other transit providers at the end of the year.

Next RTCS quarterly meeting - January 14, 2016 (tentative)

Subcommittee Meeting ended at 10:37 a.m.