

10B. SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES

LONG RANGE PLANNING

1. Sub-regional Planning Initiatives (SPI)

- Staff received approval for three (3) Advanced Funding Agreements (AFA) for regional planning studies included in the 2021-2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The AFA's have been submitted to TxDOT for approval.
- Chambers County Thoroughfare Plan study began July 1, 2023. The consultant team is collecting data to present at the first Steering Committee in October 2023.
- Four studies, Washington Avenue Corridor Study, Old 6th Ward/TIRZ 13 Mobility Study, FM 518 Corridor Study and Pearland Mobility Study are currently in the pre-contracting phase. These four studies are tentatively scheduled to begin the Fall 2023.
- Staff is procuring two (2) subregional plans, Cemetery Road Corridor study and Friendswood's Parkway Corridor study. These projects are included in the 2021-2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Work on these studies will begin January 2024.

2. Freight Planning

- The Greater Houston Freight Committee (GHFC) meeting was held on June 15th, 2023. Topics presented include Regional Goods in Project Selection, an update on the Regional Goods Movement Plan, the TxDOT Freight Parking Study update, Elevated Freight Technologies Freight Shuttle presentation and presentation of the TxDOT REAL plan. The next meeting is scheduled for October 16th, 2023, at 10am.
- The Regional Goods Movement Plan (RGMP) has developed recommendations for projects, policies, and programs and is in the final stages of development and close out. Next steps for the RGMP are to finalize plan documents and present to TAC and TPC members in Fall 2023. For more information visit: www.engage.h-gac.com
- The Houston Area Rail Transformation (HART) was presented to TAC and TPC in December of 2022 as a working group formed to coordinate and prioritize regional freight infrastructure to seek grant funding opportunities. The Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) formalized the working group as a GCRD committee on January 17, 2023. From January 2023 – July 2023 a priority list was developed that represents the regional issues seen at grade crossings. In June 2023, the Grants Group was developed to assess the readiness of regional partners for upcoming grant submittals and provide letters of support to demonstrate regional support for projects. HART working group meets monthly following TPC and anticipated to continue this pattern in the near future. H-GAC staff continues to provide meeting support and regional coordination. The next meeting is planned for September 29, 2023.

3. Regional Incident Management, Safety, and Operations

- Staff conducted a Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Meeting at Houston TranStar with TxDOT, Houston TranStar Staff, Harris County Sheriff Officer (HCSO), Houston Police Department (HPD), AECOM, and the Blue Ridge Transportation Group on September 14, 2023.
- Staff conducted a Tow and Go Operations meeting with the Harris County Sheriff Office (HCSO), Houston Police Department (HPD), AECOM, TxDOT, and the towing industry on August 31, 2023, at Houston TranStar.
- Staff from H-GAC, Kimley Horn and Associates, and the City of Houston conducted a Safety Audit of Crosstimbers from Yale Road to Hirsch Road on August 29.
- Staff from H-GAC, Kimley Horn and Associates, and the City of Houston conducted a Pre-Assessment meeting for the Safety Audit of Crosstimbers from Yale Road to Hirsch Road on August 24.
- A new Tow and Go Agreement was signed with the City of Houston to continue Tow and Go through December 31, 2024.
- Staff from H-GAC, and the City of Houston attended a Road Safety Audit Workshop on August 24 conducted by Kimley Horn.
- A Request for Proposal (RFP) for updating the Regional ITS Architecture and TSMO plan closed on August 3, 2023. Evaluations of the submitted proposals were done, and interviews were conducted to choose a vendor. The recommendations for a contractor will go to the H-GAC Board of Directors on September 19, 2023.
- Staff attended weekly Statewide TIM Calls during the month of August.
- "Tow and Go" performed 3,634 "No Cost Tows" in July 2023. Average Clearance Times was 17 minutes and 17 seconds.
- In July 2023, the 8-county region experienced 51 traffic fatalities based on data from TxDOT Crash Record Information System (CRIS), which was a 14% decrease when compared to 2022 which recorded 59 fatalities.
- In July 2023, the 8-county region experienced 391 Serious Injuries based on data from TxDOT CRIS, which was less than a 5% increase when compared to June 2022 which recorded 373 Serious Injuries.

4. Environmental Planning

- Staff are updating the Eco-Logical tool to include links to existing environmental assessment and final environmental impact statements for roadway projects within the planning area. Staff will coordinate with TxDOT and consultants working on local Planning and Environmental Linkages studies to examine the application of Ecological tools on those studies.
- Staff continue to follow local Environmental Justice news as it relates to the Title VI Nondiscrimination Program and the update to the regional Title VI/Environmental Justice report.

5. Resiliency Planning

- Staff submitted a Planning Grant application for a Regional Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan through the PROTECT Discretionary Grant Program submitted on August 18th, 2023. <https://www.h-gac.com/resiliency-planning>

- Staff coordinated letters of support for regional partners PROTECT Grant Program applications.
- Staff completed work on the Resilience & Durability Pilot project as part of the FHWA program to develop transportation-specific resiliency best practices and strategies. The draft report has been finalized and accepted by FHWA. Staff has completed an update of the Foresight Panel on Environmental Effects report with outcomes from the Pilot project. For more information visit: www/h-gac.com/resiliency-planning

6. Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) subcommittee provides guidance and oversees progress of the RTP. The committee must meet quorum and meetings are held every second Wednesday of the month.
- The 2045 RTP Update was approved by TPC in April 2023. The final report and 33 associated appendixes are available online: <https://engage.h-gac.com/2045rtupdate>

7. Other Planning Activities

- Staff continued to monitor regional travel impacts of COVID-19. Regional travel volumes were monitored through StreetLight data. Transit ridership numbers are now reported quarterly from transit agencies in the region. Permanent pedestrian/bicyclist counters provide updates on counts along regional pedestrian/bicyclist facilities. Staff have developed an online [COVID-19 Regional Traffic Impacts App](#) which displays vehicular, active, and transit transportation patterns during the Pandemic.
- Work is ongoing towards the update of the Language Access Plan (LAP). The LAP specifies the policies and strategies the agency will utilize to enable individuals who do not speak the English language proficiently to participate in agency programs and activities in their language of choice.

SHORT RANGE PLANNING

1. Project Programming

- Staff coordinated the amendments to the 2023-2026 TIP document. Staff coordinated with TxDOT and local governments on the proposed amendments to the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan.
- Staff met with local sponsors as part of the quarterly TIP monitoring efforts.
- Staff worked on the development of project selection criteria for the next Call for Projects and coordinated with various subcommittees.
- After the Transportation Policy Council approved the federal performance measure targets for pavement and bridges on the National Highway System (NHS), the council asked staff to provide location maps showing the condition ratings of the region's pavements and bridges. The maps are located under [Related Links](#) on the [Transportation Performance Measures webpage](#).

2. Pedestrian and Bicyclist Planning

- Staff are continuing to work with the Data Analytics department to update the Regional Bike Network Map. Pilot testing successful. Staff are in process of collecting data from communities.

- The RFP for Connecting Buffalo Bayou East Design Concept was released, pre-proposal conference successfully held, and several proposals received.
- Staff provided additional information for the Ped Bike Bundles regarding the Advanced Funding Agreement.
- Interviews were conducted for the Senior Planner position for active transportation.
- The Bay Area Ped Bike study is underway, and the steering/stakeholder committee is being formed. The study area is adjacent to the study area for TxDOT's SH 225 and I 610 PEL Study
- Staff attended various meetings such as the City of Houston Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Texas Statewide Pedestrian Safety Forum.
- Staff prepared to host an in-person mobile counter training at H-GAC offices in October. Equipment to demonstrate the installation & removal has been ordered & received, space has been reserved & an Eventbrite event have been created. The training is scheduled for Monday October 30th from 10 A.M to 11:30 A.M.

3. Transit Planning

- The next meeting of the Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee will occur on Thursday, October 5, 2023.
- Staff are awaiting Board of Directors approval to begin consultant contract negotiations for the US 90A Corridor Transit Study.
- The RFP for the Dayton Transit Study closed on June 15, and we are awaiting supplemental UPWP funding and shall then go to the Board of Directors for approval.
- The Pearland Transit Study Alternatives Analysis is underway. A draft of service alternatives is expected by Fall 2023.
- Staff are working with Metro and regional partners to begin implementation of the Regional Transit Connectivity Project. Initial Assessments are now complete and agencies that have not already done so are moving forward to create interlocal agreements with Metro.
- Staff are working to update elements of the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan, most notably the Transit Need Index.
- The City of Conroe provided commuter service from Conroe to Houston Downtown and the Texas Medical Center. It continued after completion of the pilot program on March 31, 2023. The CMAQ pilot project has been closed. Ridership continues to increase, following the closure of the pilot project.
- An application for on-demand Microtransit services in the City of Sugar Land was received in late May 2023 under the Call for Partners for the Commuter and Transit Pilot Program and is under evaluation. Departmental action is pending.
- An updated application from Fort Bend Transit for Downtown Houston should allow CMAQ service to begin by January 2024.

TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Planning for the following projects is currently underway or were completed recently:
 - Tow & Go – Media Buying
 - Commute Solutions

- Bay Area Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety
- Pearland Public Meetings – Phase II
- Chambers County Thoroughfare Plan
- Airport Ground Access Survey
- Air Quality – Climate Change Engagement for MPO's Collar Counties
- Motorist Assistance Program (MAP) 1,000,000
- Hurricane Preparedness
- Biketober Love to Ride
- Mobile Counter Training

COMMUTE SOLUTIONS

- Commute Solutions attended the 37th Annual International Conference for the Association for Commuter Transportation in Seattle, WA.
- Commute Solutions finalized its preparations for the Commute Solutions Month. The speaker series will feature Best Workplaces for Commuters, Metro STAR Vanpool, Houston ConnectSmart, and Love to Ride.
- Commute Solutions finalized the Oncology Consultants case study. The case study will be shared with executive leadership at Oncology Consultants.
- Commute Solutions revamped the [telework resource section](#) on [yourcommutesolution.org](#). Organizations now have access to free self-implementation documents that can be used when implementing a telework or hybrid work model.
- Commute Solutions and ConnectSmart met with representatives from Rice University, Texas Medical Center, and provided updates to representatives at UHD regarding the establishment of a mega carpool.
- Love to Ride hosted the 7th Bike the Gulf steering committee meeting and is coordinating with the members to distribute 200+ yard signs along high traffic bike/multi-use paths. These are a part of the marketing campaign for Biketober and to continue encouraging the use of bikes for transportation.
- AECOM initiated its project to begin evaluating the Commute Solutions program as it relates to the region's needs to recommend the direction for Commute Solutions program. AECOM began building a list of potential participants and will determine their role in the feedback process. AECOM also is building an inventory of TDM activities, tools, organizations, and services currently provided.
- Commute Solutions is collaborating with METRO Star Vanpool on numerous events including transportation fairs and health and safety events throughout the region.

CLEAN VEHICLES PROGRAMS PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- Staff continue to work on a project to reassess the availability of Buy America compliant vehicles suitable for inclusion as part of the Clean Vehicles Program. Staff is continuing to work to reach out to manufacturers of vehicles and electric vehicle charging equipment to discuss Buy America requirements and the availability of compliant equipment. Staff is also working to review recent revisions to federal Buy America rules. This work is ongoing.
- Staff worked with grant recipients with pending vehicle deliveries to prepare.
- Staff monitored projects with completed vehicle deliveries and calculated emission reductions based upon subrecipient performances. This monitoring effort ensures that grant recipients' usage

of vehicles remains within grant requirements and that vehicle use and mileage commitments are met.

- Staff completed a post-delivery audit for a Cy Fair ISD project that provided grant funding for the purchase of electric buses, and Pasadena ISD for grant funding for Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses. Additionally, Staff continued to work with two SEP-funded contracts; Danbury and Lamar Consolidated ISD's. Cy Fair ISD received an order of ten new battery electric school buses to replace existing models that were funded through the Clean Vehicles Program. It is anticipated that the invoicing and reporting process will begin in August.
- Staff continued to process closeouts for projects meeting minimum contracted requirements for all project vehicles.

GENERAL AIR QUALITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

- Staff worked to prepare for the anticipated award of the EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG). This four-year program will bring \$1 million in planning funds to our region to help develop greenhouse gas inventories and climate action plans for the nine-county Houston-The Woodlands-Sugarland Metropolitan Statistical Area. The results of these efforts will enable our region to apply for an anticipated \$4.6075 billion in grants as part of a later stage of this program. Staff has not yet been informed of the success of the application, however a positive response on this noncompetitive award is anticipated during September.
- H-GAC continued to work on regional efforts to support the Department of Energy sponsored Houston-Galveston Clean Cities Coalition. Under this program, staff worked with regional fleets to foster economic, environmental, and energy security by working to advance affordable, domestic transportation fuels, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies and practices. This month, staff co-led a webinar focused on renewable natural gas as well as worked to prepare for future events that will occur throughout the remainder of the year.
- Staff continues to administer two separate Environmental Protection Agency-funded Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants from the 2018 and 2019 Calls for Projects to deploy all-electric yard tractors at local freight warehouses. Staff have been working with IKEA to replace two existing diesel yard tractors at their Baytown facility with all-electric models. Supply chain issues have resulted in IKEA reaching out to a new vehicle manufacturer, it is hoped that despite this change, the vehicles will still be delivered in 2023. For the 2019 DERA project, staff are continuing to prepare a Request for Applicants to find at least one new partner to complete the project. It is anticipated that the Request will be published sometime during the current quarter.

TRAVEL DEMAND MODELING & FORECASTING

- Staff continues to provide travel demand and forecasting modeling support to support the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), Air Quality and Conformity re-determination, and other traffic and travel related data developments and modeling supports.

- Staff continues to provide on-going travel demand and forecasting support to other in-house and outside H-GAC planning processes that includes sub-regional and corridor studies such as Chambers County Thoroughfare Plan Study, SH 288 Toll Road Extension Level 2 T&R Project (a Brazoria County Toll Road project), SH 225 & I-610 PEL Study , HCTRA Lynchburg Ferry Traffic Projection Study, SH 146 Study/Schematic, Bay Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan, Fort Bend Toll Road Extension, I-610 South corridor study, Pearland Transit Needs Assessment, support for the analysis for fixed route and micro transit, provided LOSPlan reports for Widening of FM 2920, LOS analysis support of 40 intersections, the evaluation of intersection control along 11 corridors in the TxDOT Houston District, intersection capacity analysis for SH 332 at FM 523, provides support to the development of Comprehensive Plan for Old Fresno Area project.
- Staff continues to provide support in response to the TCEQ and FHWA comments regarding the 2023 Air Quality conformity analysis.
- Staff finalized the reformatting of the 2022 On-board Origin-Destination Transit Survey datasets that will prevent the sharing of certain information that appears personal in the raw data set for public consumption and delivered the datasets to the fixed routes transit agencies that participated in the survey, coordinated with TxDOT TP&P Project Manager for H-GAC August 16th 2023 TAC project PowerPoint slides updates on the on-going Household Survey within H-GAC Metropolitan Planning Organization region (MPO), continues to coordinate with the contractor and other H-GAC partners such as TxDOT Houston District, and the City of Houston (HAS) in the planning of the Airport Ground Access Survey, continues developing, reviewing the sample plans, logistics for the survey, and continues discussions and scope of work development and reviews for Bicycle and Pedestrian, the Active Transportation Survey, TNC and Autonomous State Preference Survey.
- Staff plans to resume the traffic counts collection this fall on the Off-State facilities with the Prime contractor (C.J Hench), continues to coordinate with TxDOT to better understand the big data (Replica, Wejo, and Inrix) data purchased for Texas, continues working to collect data for the development of the Volpe RDR resiliency tool for the Activity-Based-Model (ABM), and continues model testing and development of the ABM by conducting modeling validation of the ABM and the TDM models, the TDM output conversion to REMI, completed cost/benefit analyses for several scenarios using REMI and the use of the REMI modeling to support the Pearland Transit project .
- Staff continues to assist the Transportation Department with congestion analysis and performance evaluation plan.
- Staff continues to review the 5000 zones of the eight-county regional modeling network and continues to split larger Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) for a more realistic trip distributions and assignment.