

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN - APPENDIX A PUBLIC COMMENTS

September 2024



THE HOUSTON-GALVESTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA





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**Appendix A**  
**Language Access Plan Update**  
**Public Comments**

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## Appendix A – Public Comments

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### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS FOR THE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

The public comment period for the Draft update to the Language Access Plan was originally scheduled for on July 12, 2024 to August 12, 2024, and the plan adoption for August 2024. These dates were pushed back due to the impact and after-effects of Hurricane Beryl. The public comment period was changed to July 22, 2024 to August 21, 2024, and the adoption of the updated plan scheduled for September, 2024.

Efforts to engage members of the public in the Language Access Plan update included “Roundtable Meetings” with ethnic minority community leaders, advocates, and interested members of the community; “Tabling” events at community events – fairs, festivals, independence celebrations, neighborhood meetings, “national-night-out” gatherings, one-on-one engagement; and a virtual public meeting. Information about the Language Access Plan Update effort was also broadcast through legal notices, email contacts, social media outreach, flyers, freeway dynamic message signs, and by word of mouth. The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) website was used to communicate interactively with the public, and to provide updated information on the Title VI and Environmental Justice Program. The “Language and Engagement Survey” gathered information about people’s language use and examined how much the survey taker knew about H-GAC and its programs and activities. Information received through this pilot survey are summarized in Appendix “B.” This document lists the comments received via the online public comment portal and the Language and Engagement Survey.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ONLINE

<i>Comment 1:</i>	<b>Topic: Disability</b>	<i>Submitted by Lynn</i>
<p>The disabled are more than the deaf. There are the visually impaired, quadriplegics like me who use an eye gaze computer.</p> <p><a href="https://bridgingapps.org/">https://bridgingapps.org/</a>.  <a href="https://eastersealshouston.org/tech-tools/">https://eastersealshouston.org/tech-tools/</a>.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comments and also for the information about meeting the communication needs of persons with disabilities. The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) strives to ensure that everyone who seeks to participate can access the agency’s programs and activities, including individuals with communication challenges. H-GAC will continue to build on its capabilities to meet the communication needs of the diverse population that call the Houston-Galveston metropolitan planning area home.</p>		

<i>Comment 2:</i>	<b>Topic: Diversity</b>	<i>Submitted by Sung</i>
<p>I sincerely appreciate the interest and survey in language accessibility at H-GAC. Houston has the most diverse city in the United States. However, for diversity to be a driving force for the growth of a city or community, language support must be priority. Unfortunately, language support is limited to 4-5 languages, such as English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese, just like in other cities and states. In addition, even within AAPI communities, immigrant communities with small populations such as Koreans are discriminated against in terms of language support, resulting in double discrimination.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for the comment. The ability to provide language support is often constrained by staffing shortages, the lack of resources, and technological limitations. As you point out, communities with small populations are often left out while the larger communities are served.</p> <p>H-GAC strives to engage with individuals from all cultural and national backgrounds, including members of the AAPI and Korean community. Free language assistance will be provided to attendees of H-GAC's public events to enable them to fully engage in the event. H-GAC however asks for advance notification of the kind of language service required so that suitable arrangements can be made with the service providers.</p>		

<i>Comment 3:</i>	<b>Topic: Public Comments</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>H-GAC should meaningfully consider public comment before approving the draft Plan.</p> <p>H-GAC is accepting comments on the draft Plan until 5:00pm on August 21, 2024. The Plan itself says it is "To Be Adopted August 23, 2024." This quick turnaround brings into question whether there is enough time for H-GAC to review and meaningfully consider public comments and make appropriate changes to the Plan. H-GAC should postpone adoption of the Plan until H-GAC can review and meaningfully consider public comments and make appropriate changes based on public input.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comment. The original plan was to complete the Language Access Plan (LAP) update process by August 2024. Unfortunately, Hurricane Beryl disrupted this schedule. Adoption of the LAP has been moved to back to September 2024, allowing for adequate review and response to the public comments.</p>		

<i>Comment 4:</i>	<b>Topic: Community Roundtables</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>The website states H-GAC will have "community roundtable events" which "run through the fall of 2024." While the Houston Department of Transformation appreciates such events and the opportunity they might bring to the public to engage with H-GAC, the group would appreciate clarity before attending such events and taking the time to prepare comments whether H-GAC plans to further amend the Plan at a later date based on feedback at those events.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comment. The roundtable meeting events serve to build bonds with the different communities. It is envisioned that H-GAC will continue to hold these meetings for that purpose, going forward.</p>		

<i>Comment 5:</i>	<b>Topic: Language and Engagement Survey</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>The "Language and Engagement Survey" was not completely translated.</p> <p>Leadership from the Houston Department of Transformation completed the "Language and Engagement Survey" available on the H-GAC website. They completed the survey in Spanish. They noticed at least three major issues with the survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, the "Submit" button was in English even though they elected to take the survey in Spanish.</li> <li>• Second, the "Questions About This Survey" notice on the webpage was also in English, even though they elected to take the survey in Spanish.</li> <li>• Third, after submitting (via an English "Submit" button), an English language "Thank you for participating..." message appeared.</li> </ul>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comment. H-GAC will look into these issues and work to resolve them.</p>		

<i>Comment 6:</i>	<b>Topic: Website</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>It is not clear how to access non-English versions of the H-GAC website.</p> <p>On top of the deficient "Language and Engagement Survey", there is no clear way to access non-English versions of the H-GAC website. There is no apparent means to select another language on the website.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comment. H-GAC will consider and address the comments as it finds appropriate.</p>		

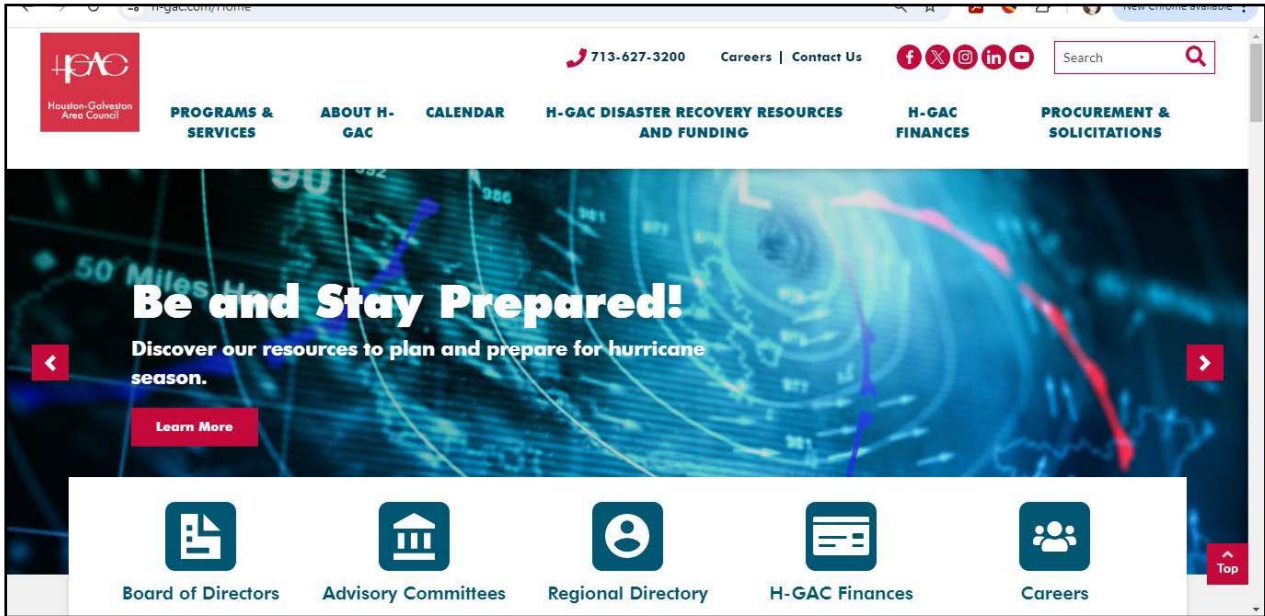


Comment 7:

**Topic: Website**

Submitted by Chase P  
Lone Star Legal Aid

The following screenshot from the H-GAC website shows as much. The website is H-GAC’s “front door” to the area population and likely H-GAC’s primary means of public engagement yet is not at all accessible by LEP persons. This is an obvious problem. Additionally, it brings into question if the public could access and complete the “Language and Engagement Survey” and reach and review the draft Language Access Plan.



**Response:**

Thank you for the comment.

Access to the Language and Engagement Survey was facilitated in several ways:

- H-GAC circulated flyers in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean as part of the LAP outreach effort. Each flyer contained a URL and a QR code that opened the survey in the same language as the flyer.
- When surveys were administered live, staff were able to guide survey takers directly to their preferred language.
- A set of weblinks in the various languages were placed at the top of the online survey page. These links allowed survey takers to select the survey in any of the five languages supported.

<i>Comment 8:</i>	<b>Topic: Safe Harbor Analysis</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
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There are multiple opportunities to improve the draft Plan.  
The following suggestions should be adopted by H-GAC in a revised Language Access Plan.

H-GAC’s Safe Harbor Analysis is flawed:  
H-GAC’s Safe Harbor Analysis concludes that because “Other Indo-European languages” and “Other Asian and Pacific Island Languages” group multiple languages together, “it is not possible to tell if any individual language within the language group[s] meets the 1,000 native speaker threshold.” Therefore, languages such as Urdu appear to be set aside as failing to meet the 1,000 native speaker Safe Harbor threshold.

However, just below this statement, the Plan’s Table 5 shows that, for example, there were over 10,000 Urdu speaking LEP residents in the H-GAC planning area according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate. Hindi, also, appears to be set aside even though there were over 6,000 Hindi speaking LEP residents in the 2015 5-Year estimate. It seems exceedingly unlikely these languages do not actually meet the 1,000 native speaker threshold required by the Safe Harbor Rule.

H-GAC is proposing a descriptive flaw in data collection should lead several languages to be excluded under the Safe Harbor Rule. This issue warrants further investigation by H-GAC into whether its activities have ever and would be expected to impact groups of persons who speak languages such as Urdu and Hindi.

**Response:**

Thank you for this comment. When languages are classified into groups such as “Other Indo-European languages” or “Other Asian and Pacific Island Languages,” it is impossible to know how many people within the group speak a particular language. Table 5, (based on the 2011 – 2015 ACS), dates back to a time when the number of native speakers of each individual language was still being published. According to Table 5, languages spoken in the Houston metropolitan area with at least 1,000 native LEP speakers include Urdu, Arabic, Tagalog, Hindi, Korean, Gujarati, French, Persian, Russian, Mon-Khmer, to name a few.

The “Safe Harbor” analysis is an individualized test whose goal is to set an objective limit to the amount of translation work that organizations in big cities must perform to meet their obligation to translate vital documents. Under the Safe Harbor analysis, organizations must apply either the 5% threshold, or the 1,000 native speaker threshold, “**whichever is less**” (i.e. results in fewer languages to translate). For the Houston metropolitan region, the 5% threshold results in fewer languages to translate than the 1,000 native speaker threshold, as only Spanish and Vietnamese meet the 5% LEP population threshold. H-GAC, in its discretion, adds Chinese to the list of Safe Harbor languages for the translation of the agency’s vital documents.

The Safe Harbor standard described above is applies to the framework of the H-GAC eight-county metropolitan planning region. When H-GAC conducts subregional and local planning studies, the research must look at the demography within the study area and ensure that meaningful access is given to all the residents of the area, including individuals who need language assistance.

Finally, notwithstanding the Safe Harbor designations, anyone can request H-GAC to translate a particular vital documents into a language other than English, .

*Comment 9:*

**Topic: Oral Interpretation**

*Submitted by Chase P  
Lone Star Legal Aid*

H-GAC should not and cannot depend on its own staff to provide accurate oral interpretation and translation services unless that staff is properly trained and certified/accredited in providing those services.

The Plan largely depends on H-GAC staff to provide oral interpretation and translation services. This is not generally considered the preferred method of doing so, as it is considered preferred and best practice to utilize professional, training, and certified/accredited interpreters and translators to perform such work. The Plan should be amended to note that as allowed by H-GAC resources and when necessary to ensure effective language access services, H-GAC will prefer and utilize certified/accredited professional interpreters and translators.

*Response:*

Thank you for the comment. USDOT guidance notes that bilingual staff offer "one of the best, and often most economical options" for language assistance, and also that competency to interpret "does not necessarily mean formal certification as an interpreter." H-GAC will continue use a mix of options that, in its best judgment, provides competent and effective language assistance services to stakeholders who are LEP.

<p><i>Comment 10:</i></p>	<p><b>Topic: Bilingual Staff</b></p>	<p>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</p>
<p>While the Commenters recognize that utilizing bilingual H-GAC staff to provide language access services can be a resource-effective means of doing so, the Plan inadequately explains how H-GAC will ensure that staff is <i>competent</i> and <i>effective</i> in providing those services. As the Department of Transportation noted in its 2005 "Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons":</p> <p>Competency requires more than self-identification as bilingual. Some bilingual staff and community volunteers, for instance, may be able to communicate effectively in a different language when communicating information directly in that language, but not be competent to interpret into and out of English. Likewise, they may not be able to do written translations.</p> <p>Section 3.1 of the Plan, discussing oral interpretation services, does state bilingual staff will be "trained" and that bilingual staff will be "familiar with the technical terminology used within the agency's transportation programs [and] have knowledge of equivalent words and phraseology that will be familiar to the target community." Section 5.0 briefly describes general "Staff Training" that will be implemented. Section 3.1 should be amended to state how H-GAC will ensure bilingual staff are actually competent and effective in interpreting technical topics into and out of English. Training is a start, but the Plan does not state how H-GAC will <i>assess</i> staff's retention of training, nor does it state how H-GAC will ensure its training actually results in competent and effective language access services.</p> <p>Section 3.1 also states "H-GAC maintains a current list of employees who are proficient in languages other than English and are willing to serve as interpreters." Such willingness is appreciated, but H-GAC cannot assume that bilingual staff that work in H- GAC programs know or can effectively use technical terminology in other languages. The Plan should be amended to state bilingual staff will be tested or evaluated before being utilized to provide language access services.</p> <p>All interpreters used by H-GAC must demonstrate proficiency, demonstrate specialized vocabulary and phraseology, and understand other responsibilities which come with the job.</p> <p>The Plan should also be amended to state H-GAC will review and ensure all interpreters, including hired professional vendors, demonstrate proficiency and the specialized knowledge required to provide services at H-GAC events.</p>		
<p><i>Response:</i></p>		
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC tests its staff to evaluate their ability to perform effective and competent interpretation, and assigns them to duties that best fit their abilities.</p>		

<i>Comment 12:</i>	<b>Topic: Confidentiality</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>As noted in the Department of Transportation’s guidance, H-GAC must also require interpreters “understand and follow confidentiality and impartiality rules” and “understand and adhere to their roles as interpreters without deviating into a role as counselor, legal advisor, or other roles.” Section 3.1 of the Plan should be amended to reflect that all interpreters must show they understand those responsibilities before serving at H-GAC events.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for the comment. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration as it finalizes the Language Assistance Plan.</p>		

<i>Comment 13:</i>	<b>Topic: Community Volunteers</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>H-GAC cannot and should not depend on “qualified community volunteers” to provide oral interpretation services:</p> <p>Section 3.1 of the Plan states H-GAC will “engag[e] qualified community volunteers” to help perform outreach and to help provide meaningful language access services. H- GAC will have very little means of evaluating volunteers’ ability to discuss technical subject matters and should not overly rely on “community volunteers” to do so. Further, reliance on volunteers inappropriately flips the burden to the community to provide itself access to H-GAC.</p> <p>Certainly, it is appropriate to engage with community leaders and other community members to help build relationships with communities. If H-GAC does rely on community members to assist H-GAC with outreach or provide language access services, H-GAC should compensate those community members for their time and effort.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC recognizes the importance of maintaining a good working relationship with community leaders, advocates, and other community members as this is a best practice for building trust, understanding, and support in the underserved communities. H-GAC will take the comments into consideration.</p>		

<i>Comment 14:</i>	<b>Topic: Requests for Assistance</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>48 hours is not always enough time to obtain certified and accredited language access services.</p> <p>Section 3.2 of the Plan states requests for language access must be made “at least 48 hours before the event is scheduled to take place.” The Commenters are concerned that 48 hours often is not enough time to obtain adequate interpretation services. Experiences in other settings, such as the Harris County Commissioner’s Court, have shown that there can be challenges finding interpreters on short notice, especially when the interpreters must be skilled in technical subject matter.</p> <p>At the same time, individuals who find out about an H-GAC meeting on relatively short notice must of course have the opportunity to attend the meeting and be provided meaningful language access to the meeting. H-GAC should discuss with service providers their usual availability and how much notice they require before an event takes place. The time cut-off should be adjusted to balance typical availability, consider worst-case situations, and the need for individuals to be able to request language access services without unduly long lead times which prejudice those who do not receive most advance notice of events.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration as it strives to strike a balance between the need for advance notice and avoiding unduly long lead times.</p>		

<i>Comment 15:</i>	<b>Topic: LEP Outreach</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>The Plan overly relies on LEP persons to identify their own needs and request language access services from H-GAC.</p> <p>H-GAC’s marketing has not been particularly effective at reaching most members of the public, especially LEP persons and communities with significant LEP populations. H-GAC should engage in significant community outreach to educate the public on its important work and discuss barriers to attendance and participation by LEP persons and their communities.</p> <p>Therefore, some metrics the Plan proposes to use in Section 6.0 likely understate the demand for language access services. For example, the “Frequency of LEP encounters and utilization of language assistance services” will understate demand until and unless H-GAC more meaningfully markets to and engages with LEP persons and communities. There is a significant barrier to attendance and participation at H-GAC meetings, including for some of the aforementioned reasons such as difficulty finding non-English information on the H-GAC website.</p>		

*Response:*

Thank you for your comments. H-GAC recognizes that there are several barriers to participation. Language differences is just one of them. The Language and Engagement Survey H-GAC conducted had a goal to determine the reasons behind low participation rates by some communities. The data gathered informs our plan and offers valuable suggestions for enhancing our public involvement program.

*Comment 16:*                      **Topic: Simultaneous Interpretation**                      *Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid*

The Plan should enshrine that interpretation will be offered simultaneously.

The Plan discusses providing interpretation services at H-GAC meetings and events. The Plan does not say simultaneous interpretation will always be used, nor say that simultaneous interpretation is strongly preferred. The Plan should state simultaneous interpretation will always be used absent good cause or a specific need for consecutive interpretation. The Plan should also state that H-GAC will strive to address any reasons which prevented the use of simultaneous interpretation at a meeting or other event.

Simultaneous interpretation is usually preferred over consecutive interpretation at meetings and events because it is time-efficient and allows for uninterrupted communication. There may be instances within a meeting or event where consecutive interpretation is necessary, such as a situation where a LEP person is asking a question in another language, and it makes sense for the interpreter on site to avoid talking over the LEP person. But the stated preference should be for simultaneous interpretation at meetings and events except in instances with such specific needs.

H-GAC should amend its plan to state it will utilize appropriate technology to implement simultaneous interpretation, including headsets for use by the interpreter(s) and for use by the audience. This has been adopted by other agencies, such as the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality who have successfully completed public meetings utilizing this technology in Houston.

*Response:*

Thank you for your comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration as it strives to offer language assistance services suitable to each interaction with the LEP population.

<i>Comment 17:</i>	<b>Topic: Vendors and Hardware</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P Lone Star Legal Aid</i>
<p>H-GAC should adopt an appropriate vendor for conducting virtual meetings and events which allows for efficient and effective interpretation services.</p>		
<p>The Plan does not directly address interpretation services offered at virtual or hybrid meetings. If H-GAC is to hold any such meetings, it should ensure the vendor and software H-GAC uses for those events offers effective and efficient interpretation infrastructure. For example, some providers of videotelephony software offer interpretation audio channels such that attendees can see the visual presentation and speakers but easily select an audio channel in their preferred language. Or they offer a similar option to easily select a sign language interpreter view.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for your comments. H-GAC has successfully conducted virtual meetings with simultaneous oral language interpretation. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration as it endeavors to provide effective language support to its non-English speaking stakeholders.</p>		

<i>Comment 18:</i>	<b>Topic: Office</b>	<i>Submitted by Chase P</i>
<p>H-GAC should stand up and open an "Office for Language Access" to oversee and manage the Plan and H-GAC's efforts.</p>		
<p>Implementing the Language Access Plan, including performing outreach, training, providing the actual services, and evaluating metrics is a complex job best served by an office and group of staff. The Plan, as is, does not specify a responsible group of staff for everything required of H-GAC. The Office would be a central repository for knowledge and be the known responsible party for coordinating all aspects of the Plan.</p>		
<i>Response:</i>		
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts.</p>		



## LANGUAGE AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

**Question asked:** "How can H-GAC better meet your language access needs?"

<i>Comment 1:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> <li>• Don't have any</li> <li>• All good.</li> <li>• No help</li> <li>• Nothing. I am fine.</li> <li>• New here. Not sure.</li> <li>• Nothing in mind</li> <li>• I am quite OK</li> <li>• I do not know</li> <li>• Nothing that I can think of</li> <li>• No need</li> <li>• I speak English</li> <li>• I speak and write English</li> <li>• Nothing that I can think of</li> <li>• I have not attended any meetings so I wouldn't know</li> <li>• I speak English but we can help others</li> <li>• No language needs. I understand English</li> <li>• Ask the people that attend the meetings</li> <li>• Make me understand</li> <li>• English is my first (only) language.</li> <li>• I am already fully bilingual</li> <li>• No language barrier</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Response:</i></p>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. The H-GAC metropolitan planning region is a melting pot consisting of individuals from many different languages and cultures. All area residents are entitled to participate in the planning decisions that impact their lives and environment. Being able to communicate proficiently in the English language eliminates one of the barriers to participation.</p>	

Comment 2:	Topic: General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide help</li> <li>• Yes absolutely</li> <li>• By calling meeting with me</li> <li>• An interpreter would help</li> <li>• Offer free language classes</li> <li>• Include subtitles in my language</li> <li>• Make it very Cheap</li> <li>• Have interpreters for most common languages</li> <li>• Translate in Spanish</li> <li>• Asl interpreter</li> <li>• Please include Igbo language in your list. Thank you.</li> <li>• web comgalveston.com   email watersoflifem@yahoo.com   office 409-229-1394</li> <li>• Interpretations and other flyers or communication options</li> <li>• People should know about the free language interpreter</li> <li>• Enable me to assist in this cause</li> <li>• We can start by learning other languages in school</li> <li>• Great Customer Service</li> <li>• Transparency. Put out this information for the public.</li> <li>• I love that this resource is available to those in need</li> <li>• Mensajes de textos [<i>Translation</i> : " <i>Text Messages</i>"]</li> <li>• Talk about building village-like communities for people of like interests</li> <li>• Relating to my patients with healthcare needs</li> <li>• I'm good, but if you need an interpreter agency, I can refer you to one.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Response:</i></p>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. Thank you for the comments. The Houston-Galveston metropolitan planning area is a melting pot of individuals from many different languages and cultures. Everyone is entitled to participate in the planning decisions that may impact their lives and environment.</p> <p>H-GAC acknowledges the expressed desire to help those in need of language support, and will take the comments into account in its continuing planning analysis.</p>	

<i>Comment 3:</i>	<b>Topic: The Elderly</b>
Get information out to the older people.	
<i>Response:</i>	Thank you for the comments. Elderly immigrants represent a demographic group for whom language support could be a necessity, especially where, due to their national origin, they have not had a history of communication in English. H-GAC recognizes this fact and will take this comments into consideration.

<i>Comment 4:</i>	<b>Topic: LEP Support</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Conduct outreach to determine how to advertise the meeting notices based on communities</li><li>2. Provide simultaneous interpretation</li><li>3. Release multilingual simultaneous communications</li><li>4. Consider local businesses like Ronquillo Consulting Group to provide culturally competent interpretation, translation, and outreach consulting. Email is: <a href="mailto:ronquillos2020@gmail.com">ronquillos2020@gmail.com</a>.</li></ol>	
<i>Response:</i>	Thank you for the comments. Having the ability to communicate in multiple languages is important in a diverse community like the Houston metropolitan region. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts.

<i>Comment 5:</i>	<b>Topic: English Language</b>
<p>English is the official language of our country and that needs to be respected. I am not trying to exclude anyone but feel that if you are going to live and work in this country that you should be respectful enough to learn the language. I do feel that including other languages in areas where tourist are likely (airports, bus stations, etc.) is very appropriate but never to the point of excluding English.</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. It usually takes time for English language learners to attain a comfortable level of proficiency in the language. In the interim, language assistance makes sure they can engage fully in civic life while they improve their English communication skills.</p>	

<i>Comment 6:</i>	<b>Topic: Language Lessons</b>
<p>Give free classes to the community on different languages barriers and give out information on classes they can take to learn different languages.</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the feedback. H-GAC will take this feedback into account in the agency's ongoing planning efforts.</p>	

<i>Comment 7:</i>	<b>Topic: English Language</b>
<p>English is the official language of the US. Interpreters are an unnecessary expense and wasteful use of taxpayer funds</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts. According to the law, however, organizations that receive funding from the federal government are required to offer language assistance to eligible individuals who are not be able to communicate fluently in English.</p>	

<b>Comment 8:</b>	<b>Topic: Integration</b>
<p>I am an immigrant from a north European country, a citizen for sixty years, and i speak and understand five European languages. Everyone who comes to the United States should learn English immediately. There is no civic participation possible for them until they learn to speak and comprehend English. There is no need to translate. immigrants should learn the language and customs of our country before they can become part of it.</p>	
<b>Response:</b>	
<p>Thank you for the Comments. H-GAC will consider this feedback in its ongoing planning analysis.</p> <p>For those learning the language, mastering English may take some time. Providing language assistance makes sure they can engage fully in civic life while they improve their English communication skills. On the contrary, not offering language support to English language learners so they can participate in a federally supported program may be considered national origin discrimination - which is illegal under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.</p>	

<b>Comment 9:</b>	<b>Topic: Appropriate Access</b>
<p>Gracias por hacer este encuesta. Sera más facil para mi de participar si este formulario no estaria en el internet. Mi hija me ayudo hacerlo aqui.</p> <p><i>[<b>Translation:</b> Thank you for conducting this survey. It would be easier for me to participate if the form was not online. My daughter helped me complete it here].</i></p>	
<b>Response:</b>	
<p>Gracias por sus comentarios. Nos alegra que su hija le haya podido ayudar a completar la encuesta. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a mejorar nuestro servicio al público.</p> <p><i>[<b>Translation:</b> Thank you the feedback. We are glad your daughter was able to help you complete the survey online. Your answers will help us improve our service to the public].</i></p>	

<i>Comment 10:</i>	<b>Topic: Helpful Visual Aids</b>
<p>Posters were displayed at the meeting I attended, but were only in English. I came with a Spanish speaker and they did not have the same access to the material as I did. Posters should be in the most common languages of our region.</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. It is regrettable that your friend who speaks Spanish was unable to participate fully in the event due to a language barrier. It is not always feasible to create multilingual meeting posters. However, you could ask H-GAC to provide a language interpreter for future events. This service is available to the general public at no cost.</p>	

<i>Comment 11:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
<p>H-GAC can reach out to me through email and posting on H-GAC website with respect to bettering my English communication skills</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. Visit the H-GAC website via the link below for more information about our language assistance program.  <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan">https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan</a></p>	

<i>Comment 12:</i>	<b>Topic: Spanish Language Support</b>
<p>Spanish is my first language and I like to know everything like that first</p>	
<i>Response:</i>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC offers language assistance for stakeholders who wish to attend a public event conducted by the agency. Visit the H-GAC website via the link below for more information about our language assistance program.  <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan">https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan</a>.</p>	

<i>Comment 13:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
Give free classes to the community on different languages barriers and give out information on classes they can take to learn different languages.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will consider this feedback in its ongoing planning efforts.	

<i>Comment 14:</i>	<b>Topic: Interpreters</b>
Southern Vietnamese translators and interpreters would be needed.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. Vietnamese is one of the languages that H-GAC prioritizes for the translation of the agency's vital documents. Visit the H-GAC website via the link below for more information about our language assistance program. <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan">https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan</a> .	

<i>Comment 14:</i>	<b>Topic: Education</b>
My language needs are met, but I know that many in our region struggle with language access due to not being a native English Speaker or having low literacy. About 1 in 5 adults are considered functionally illiterate, which can create barriers to accessing information.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing analysis.	

<i>Comment 15:</i>	<b>Topic: Arabic Language Speakers</b>
Do we have any Arabic speakers?	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the question. According to the US Census Bureau’s 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, The H-GAC metropolitan planning region is home to about 12,500 Arabic speakers who are identified as limited in English language skills. H-GAC endeavors to ensure that everyone who wants to attend its public events has access to free language support, including the native Arabic speakers.	

<i>Comment 16:</i>	<b>Topic: Notice to Public</b>
Please make certain that everyone in Houston know about the interpreter availability (I didn't), and that those who need visual or auditory support know about those resources as well.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will continue the effort to spread the word about its free language access support services to the general public.	

<i>Comment 17:</i>	<b>Topic: Video Conferencing</b>
Is it possible to attend the meetings by video conference?	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the question. It is possible to attend certain H-GAC meetings by video conference. H-GAC’s Board meetings are streamed live so members of the public can attend virtually. You can join a live broadcast or view previous meeting recordings via the link: <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/live">https://www.h-gac.com/live</a> .	



<i>Comment 18:</i>	<b>Topic: Meeting Content</b>
At times, the discussion becomes too technical and bureaucratically complex.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. Public participation is most effective when the public is able to understand and follow the discussions. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts.	

<i>Comment 19:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
Community outreach, providing necessary funding for projects and programs for disadvantaged families here.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. Public involvement is key to getting to know the needs and priorities of the disadvantaged communities. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing analysis.	

<i>Comment 20:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
Although I speak English very well, I would say please put out excellent communications for the masses on a regular basis. That's really important. A lot of people don't know about the transportation system and the word needs to get out. Thank you all so much for what you do.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will keep up its efforts to inform the general public about opportunities for public involvement in our transportation planning process. We additionally encourage you to continue your advocacy on behalf of the underprivileged.	

<i>Comment 21:</i>	<b>Topic: Language Interpreters</b>
<p>Prestando un traductor si hay algo que no se entiende en inglés, o proporcionando alguien que hable bien el idioma español.</p>	
<p><b>Translation:</b>                      Providing a translator if there is something that is not understood in English, or providing someone who speaks the Spanish language well].</p>	
<p><b>Response:</b></p>	
<p>Gracias por los comentarios. Es política de H-GAC proporcionar intérpretes de idiomas sin costo para que las personas que no hablan inglés puedan participar de manera efectiva en los programas y actividades de H-GAC. Visite el sitio web de H-GAC a través del siguiente enlace para obtener más información sobre nuestro programa de asistencia lingüística.  <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan">https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan</a></p>	
<p><b>Translation:</b>                      Thank you for the comments. It is the policy at H-GAC to provide language interpreters free of cost so that the non-English speakers can participate effectively in H-GAC’s programs and activities. Visit the H-GAC website via the link below for more information about our language assistance program.  <a href="https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan">https://www.h-gac.com/title-vi-program/language-access-plan</a></p>	

<i>Comment 22:</i>	<b>Topic: LEP Solutions</b>
<p>Possibly provide translation services for businesses and communities. Employ multilingual staff and/or provide language training in key public service areas such as healthcare, transportation, and customer service. Offer language classes for both non-native speakers to learn the local language and for native speakers to learn other common languages in the communities. Technology integration such as mobile apps and websites with multilingual support to disseminate the information and facilitate communication, community outreach and public signage.</p>	
<p><b>Response:</b></p>	
<p>Thank you for the comments. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts.</p>	

<i>Comment 23:</i>	<b>Topic: Effective Access</b>
To better understand please take time to ask the public if need more clarity, of topic or more information is needed. Thank you.	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. Public participation is most effective when the public is able to understand and follow the discussions. H-GAC will take these comments into consideration in its ongoing planning effort.	

<i>Comment 24:</i>	<b>Topic: Meeting Schedules</b>
My problems are the times and locations. As a working parent, in person meetings in the middle of the week are not practical."	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. This information is important to our outreach initiatives. The feedback will be taken into account in our ongoing planning efforts.	

<i>Comment 25:</i>	<b>Topic: General</b>
This doesn't apply to me, BUT I believe in the past two weeks, some Korean residents complained about the Korean language not being accessible at Houston City Council. So maybe a language to pursue if you have not already :).	
<i>Response:</i>	
Thank you for the comments. Public participation is most effective when the public is able to understand and follow the discussions, which may require providing language support. H-GAC has reached out to the Korean community to follow their quest for language justice, and will take this comment into consideration in its ongoing planning efforts.	