Project Selection Process Key Terms Definitions and Glossary

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Investment Categories

Regional Goods Movement: The Regional Goods Movement Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively enhance or improve safe and reliable freight mobility throughout the region.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: Roadway projects that are located on highways classified as Urban Critical Freight Corridor (UCFC) or Rural Critical Freight Corridor (RCFC) or intermodal connectors; Projects proposed on roadways that provide connectivity to major goods-related origins and destinations (e.g., large warehouses or distribution centers, large retail activity centers, port facilities, etc.); Projects located on facilities with high truck volumes. Although not the focus of this investment category, projects that also enhance hurricane evacuation will receive additional priority.

Operational Improvements & Congestion Management: The Operational Improvements and Congestion Management Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively deliver traffic management and other operational improvements, as well as mitigate current congestion.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: Projects that reduce congestion and reduce travel delay. Includes High-Occupant Vehicle (HOV) expansions, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects, railroad/roadway crossing improvements, and projects that enhance or optimize hurricane evacuation. Projects that address railroad safety and delays may also be considered.

High-Growth Area Needs: The High-Growth Area Needs Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively address mobility, accessibility, and

congestion mitigation needs in areas experiencing rapid or significant growth in population or other demographic measures, economic development, travel demand, or other indicators identified by local agencies.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: Roadway, freight, active transportation, or transit projects that address the needs of rapid or significant growth in population or other demographics, economic activity, traffic demand, or other indicators. Development of facilities that will avoid or mitigate future congestion in high growth areas. High growth areas are not limited to a specific geography. Project sponsors may define the high growth need a project will address. Sponsors that use defined high-growth areas defined by a locally-approved or H-GAC sponsored regional plan will receive additional consideration.

Active Transportation: The Active Transportation Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively enhance or improve walking and bicycling for essential trip-making in the region.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: On-and off-road bicycle & pedestrian projects that facilitate essential trip making including universal accessibility projects for transit.

Transit: The Transit Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively provide, expand, or enhance transit infrastructure throughout the region.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: All transit projects, including HOV expansions, BRT, Intelligent Transportation Systems projects, sidewalks near transit, etc.

Major Projects: The Major Projects Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that are regional in scope, most effectively address goals and priorities of the Transportation Policy Council or identified in the Regional Transportation Plan, and exceed $100 million in total estimated costs.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: All projects with an estimated total project cost of $100 million or more.

Resiliency & State of Good Repair: The Resiliency and State of Good Repair Investment Category is established to identify, develop, and fund projects that most effectively help the transportation system avoid or recover quickly from events that create delays, closures, or other impacts, and projects that provide maintenance of current transportation facilities and services.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: Projects focused on resiliency improvements (including those that address flooding, erosion, or damage from severe weather events) and extending useful life of the facility. May include projects that enhance or optimize hurricane evacuation. (Additional eligibility factors may be added pending full guidance from

FHWA about the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) program funding eligibility.)

Safety: The Safety Investment Category is established to identify, develop and fund projects that most effectively will reduce or eliminate crashes that result in fatalities and serious injuries.

Typical projects and assessment considerations will include: Projects focused solely on safety improvements in high crash areas (Details TBD pending recommendations of Safety Task Force).

Example Project Elements:

The following table shows examples of the types of project elements (i.e., construction activities, programs, etc.) that could be included as part of projects selected in each of the eight Investment Categories. This list of project elements is not intended to be exhaustive or restrictive.

Investment Category	Rehab/ Restoration	Added Capacity	New Road	Access Management	Intersection Improv. & Grade Separations	ITS	Sidewalks/ Bike Lanes	Transit Facilities
Regional Goods Movement	■	■		■	■	■		
Operational Improvements		■		■	■	■		■
High-Growth Area Needs		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Active Transportation					■		■	
Transit	■					■	■	■
Major Projects		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Resiliency **	■				■	■		
Safety **					■	■	■	

Definitions of Typical Project Elements

Rehabilitation/Restoration (Maintenance): Projects that reconstruct or rehabilitate streets/highways/freight/bridges that are being used beyond useful life or to continue their full usefulness during their expected lifespan.

Added Capacity: Street/Highway projects that add additional vehicular travel lanes. This does not include turn lanes at an intersection.

New Roadway: Projects that construct new streets/highways on a new alignment. Also projects that extend existing streets/highways beyond their existing limits.

Access Management: Projects that consolidate driveways into ingress and egress, construct raised medians, and construct channelization at ingress and egress points.

Intersection Improvements & Grade Separations: Projects that improve operational and safety conditions by constructing additional turn lanes or right turn bays at existing intersections. Additionally, projects that convert at-grade intersections into an interchange or construct grade separations for at-grade streets/highways railroad crossings.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS): Installing closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, dynamic message signs, fiber optic cables, signal coordination, or other activities that implement ITS for the region.

Sidewalks & Bike Lanes: Sidewalks, on- and off-street bike lanes, multi-use trails, shared use paths, ADA ramps.

Transit Facilities: Transfer stations, park & ride lots, garages, multimodal transit centers, bus/rail shelters.

Eligibility of Funding Sources:

The following table shows the potential federal or state funding sources that may be used to fund projects in each Investment Category. The list of construction activities is not intended to be exhaustive or restrictive

Investment Category	Surface Transportation Block Grant	Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Program	Transportation Alternatives Program	Metropolitan and Urban Area Corridor Projects
Regional Goods Movement				
Operational Improvements				
High-Growth Area Needs				
Active Transportation				
Transit				
Major Projects				
Resiliency and State of Good Repair				
Safety				

H-GAC staff will review each candidate or selected project and determine the appropriate funding eligibility and best match for each project. Staff will also consider overall funding availability from different sources.

Definitions of Typical Construction Activities

Surface Transportation Block Grant Funds (State Funding Category 7): Addresses a wide range of potential transportation needs within large urban regions. In general, provides flexible funding that may be used for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any Federal-aid highway; bridge and tunnel projects on any public road; pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and transit capital projects. This funding can be used on any roadway with a functional classification greater than a local road or rural minor collector. Surface Transportation Block Grant funding is the federal source with the broadest eligibility available to the Houston region.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (State Funding Category 5): Addresses projects that will help attain National Ambient Air Quality Standards in non-attainment areas (e.g., the Houston region). Projects are evaluated to quantify air quality improvement benefits. In general, projects are eligible for CMAQ funding consideration if they are intended to reduce emissions in the region, either through direct means (such as converting to low-emission vehicles) or through indirect means (such as traffic signal improvements that improve vehicle flow and reduce congestion, or outreach programs to promote carpooling). The air quality benefits of projects should be well-supported by recent evidence of their effects on emissions; however, innovative projects without supporting precedent data may also be considered. Common project elements include interchange improvements, local transit infrastructure (and in limited conditions, local transit operations), and bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Funds cannot be used to add capacity for single-occupancy vehicles.

Transportation Alternatives Program (State Funding Category 9): Provides funding for a variety of generally smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management; environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity; lighting and other safety-related infrastructure,; recreational trails; projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); safe routes to school projects; and vulnerable road user safety assessments.

Metropolitan and Urban Areas Corridor Projects Program (State Funding Category 2): Addresses mobility and added capacity projects on urban corridors to mitigate traffic congestion, as well as traffic safety and roadway maintenance or rehabilitation. Projects must be located on the state highway system. Common project elements include roadway widening ((freeway or non-freeway), interchange improvements, roadway operational improvements, and other project types.

Planning Factors

The Project Selection Process will assess projects using six Planning Factors. Scores will be assigned to projects based on how the proposed project meets the criteria established for each planning factor. The following table lists the Planning Factors and the potential scores that projects may receive for each factor:

	Investment Category					
Planning Factor	**Regional Goods Movement**	**Operational Improvements**	**High-Growth Area Needs**	**Active Transportation**	**Transit**	**Resiliency & SOGR**
Safety	7	7	7	7	7	7
Resiliency	5	5	5	5	5	5
Access/Connectivity	5	5	5	5	5	5
Impact on Vulnerable Populations	5	5	5	5	5	5
Impact on Cultural/Natural	5	5	5	5	5	5
Innovation	3	3	3	3	3	3
Planning Factors Total	30	30	30	30	30	30
Screening Factor						
Planning Coordination						

Safety: Evaluation based on:

- Historic fatality and severe injury crash rates within a 0.1 mile buffer of the proposed project location (quantitative data)
- Potential fatality and severe injury crash rates (quantitative data as well as qualitative (sponsor narrative))

Resiliency: Evaluation based on:

- Criticality of the street/highway facility where proposed project is located (high/medium/low score from the Regional Resiliency Tool as well as qualitative descriptions (sponsor narrative))
- Vulnerability of proposed project location to flooding of street/highway facility (high/medium/low score from regional resiliency tool as well as qualitative descriptions (sponsor narrative))

- Proposed reduction of vulnerability to flooding of the street/highway facility where proposed project is located (qualitative (sponsor narrative))

Access/Connectivity: Evaluation based on:

- Improvement to accessibility and connectivity of existing and planned land uses (as documented by official city or county future growth plans) to jobs, medical facilities, schools, colleges, and social services after the proposed project is implemented/constructed (quantitative as well as qualitative (sponsor narrative))
- Improvements to accessibility and connectivity to low-income and minority households

Environmental Justice: Evaluation based on:

- Number of low-income and minority households within a ¼ mile buffer of the project location (quantitative)
- Sponsor narrative explaining how the proposed project provides benefits to low-income and minority households
- Sponsor narrative explaining how the proposed project avoids or mitigates adverse effects to low-income and minority households

Impact on Cultural/Natural Resources: Evaluation based on:

- Potential NOx (Nitrogen Oxides) and VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) emissions reductions as a result of the proposed project (quantitative)
- Sponsor narrative explaining how proposed project avoids or mitigates impacts to natural or cultural resources such as historical sites, archeological sites, flood plains, wetlands

Innovation: Implementation of new infrastructure or technologies intended to enhance accessibility, mobility, multimodalism, resiliency, or reliability, or traffic operations. Installation of new technology such as autonomous/connected vehicle technology.

Other Evaluation or Screening Criteria

The following scoring factors have been used in previous H-GAC project selection cycles. They are continued in this Project Selection Process, with their scoring embedded in Investment Category scoring criteria or in new planning factors.

Planning Coordination (Screening Factor): In accordance with policy guidance from the Transportation Policy Council (TPC), selected projects should be supported by local communities and affected agencies/jurisdictions.

- Multijurisdictional projects (projects crossing multiple city/county boundaries) should provide support letters from all jurisdictions (cities and counties)

- Projects sponsored by special districts such as management districts, redevelopment authorities should be supported by governmental entity(ies) in which they are located
- Proposed projects should provide support letters for the on-going maintenance of the investment
- Projects recommended in H-GAC-developed or sponsored regional or subregional plans, or in plans approved by impacted local governments, will be presumed to meeting the Planning Coordination screening factor.

Hurricane Evacuation: Projects submitted in all investment categories may score points in investment Category assessments for the Regional Goods Movement, Operational Improvements and Congestion Management, High-Growth Area Needs, Transit, Major Projects, and Resiliency and State of Good Repair in accordance with the following criteria:

- Proposed project is located on the State designated hurricane evacuation route
- Proposed project is located on a highway/street that provides an alternative route to a state designated hurricane evacuation route
- Project implements recommendation from an existing Hurricane Evacuation Plan
- Explanation of how construction or implementation of the proposed project will assist/benefit the mandatory or voluntary evacuation in the event of extreme weather conditions. (sponsor narrative)

Glossary of Key Terms

Accessibility: Extent to which a transportation system provides access to important destinations and opportunities, such as employment, that support economic development and quality of life. Measures/metrics related to this criterion focus on improving access to key centers in the region and evaluate how many people can reach key destinations within desired travel times by different modes.

Active Transportation: On-and off-road bicycle and pedestrian projects that facilitate essential trip making, including universal accessibility projects for transit.

Asset Management: The process of operating, maintaining, and upgrading infrastructure to ensure a state of good repair.

Benefit-Cost Ratio: Monetized sum of a project's expected benefits divided by the sum of its costs.

Connectivity [Network Connectivity]: The extent to which a transportation system can function as a contiguous network, including an adequate number of connections and an appropriate level of redundancy. Improving connectivity includes ensuring that transportation projects connect to existing infrastructure, fill in network gaps, or build redundancy. Connectivity enhances multimodalism, reliability, resilience, and accessibility.

Cost Effectiveness: Measure of how well a project achieves desired goals for the cost. For example, the number of expected crash reductions that a project generates per dollar spent to build or maintain the project.

Deliverability: Project deliverability is the potential for a project to be implemented on time. Deliverability improves public trust in government and ensures good stewardship of available resources. Deliverability is closely related to project readiness, defined below.

Environmental Justice: Environmental Justice (EJ) at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) means identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse effects of the agency's programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations to achieve an equitable distribution of benefits and burdens.

High Growth Areas: Areas of the region that are undergoing rapid or significant growth in population, economic activity, travel activity, or other measures identified by local agencies.

Mobility: The ability to move people or goods from place to place. Measures/metrics related to this criterion evaluate how people get to destinations or how fast they can travel there.

Multimodalism: The extent to which multiple modes of transportation are accommodated along a single corridor. For example, a two-lane road with bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and regular transit service provides high multimodalism because it accommodates trips for people driving, walking, bicycling, and riding transit.

Reliability: The ability to reach destinations in a predictable amount of time, even if that trip is on congested roadways.

Resiliency: The capacity to recover quickly from stressors applied to the transportation system. Resiliency is incorporated into the FAST Act and the IIJA and linked to extreme weather and climate adaptation planning.

Readiness: Readiness is an assessment of when a project will be able to clear all regulatory requirements and commence construction or implementation. Readiness includes a project's status across a number of considerations, including preliminary planning, environmental screening and impact analysis, design information, budget and schedule detail, delay risk factors, row-of-way and utility requirements, and other permitting requirements.

Social Equity: The extent to which all people are granted fair and equitable access to the benefits of the transportation system and transportation improvements.

Vulnerable Populations: Vulnerable populations include people under poverty, minorities, elderly people (above 65 years old), people with limited educational attainment, households with zero automobile ownership, households with female head of household, and people with limited English proficiency.