

7. TRANSPORTATION AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS FOR THE 2045 RTP UPDATE

BACKGROUND

H-GAC is required to ensure that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and amendments thereto are consistent with the region’s air quality goals. This determination is referred to as Air Quality Conformity and involves the modeling of emissions produced by vehicles within the 8-county Houston-Galveston-Brazoria Nonattainment Area.

All regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source, must be considered in this analysis and found to conform before federal actions related to the projects can be made. These actions include but are not limited to funding obligations, releases for rights-of-way acquisition or final design, and approvals of environmental documents and permits.

In addition, recipients of federal-aid highway and federal transit funds, including local governments and other public agencies, are required to ensure regionally significant projects which do not use federal funds satisfy conformity requirements (40 CFR § 93.121).

To accommodate changes to project scopes and schedules, new conformity analyses are periodically performed.

CURRENT SITUATION

The transportation conformity determination for amendments to the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) received federal approval on November 4, 2022. This new conformity determination is being prepared to support the 2045 RTP Update and the amendments to the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program on the air quality re-classification for the 8-hr ozone standards. The HGB region is in non-attainment for the 8-hr ozone standard and has been re-classified as “severe” for the 2008 8-hr ozone standard and as “moderate” for the 2015 8-hr ozone standard, with attainment years 2023 and 2026 respectively.

This conformity will demonstrate compliance to the latest emission budgets based on the revision to the air quality State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the 2008 8-hr Ozone Standard due to the reclassification from moderate to serious. The Reasonable Further Progress (RFP) SIP budget was found adequate by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with an approval and effective date of June 9, 2021.

The full 2045 RTP Update and Conformity documents are available at the following links: <https://www.h-gac.com/rtp>.
<https://www.h-gac.com/transportation-conformity/2023>

Air Quality Analysis Results

Year	NOx Emissions (tpd)*	NOx Budget (tpd)	VOC Emissions (tpd)	VOC Budget (tpd)	VMT
2023	59.17✓	87.69	33.39✓	57.70	207.1 M
2026	48.85✓	87.69	28.73✓	57.70	218.0 M
2030	43.14✓	87.69	25.32✓	57.70	237.9 M
2040	42.24✓	87.69	22.51✓	57.70	279.8 M
2045	44.57✓	87.69	22.75✓	57.70	298.9 M

*tpd= tons per day, NOx= nitrogen oxides, VOC= volatile organic compounds, VMT= vehicle miles traveled

The results of this conformity determination demonstrate that the 2045 RTP Update and the 2023-2026 TIP meet the requirements of the air quality SIPs for the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria ozone nonattainment area and are in accordance with the Clean Air Act, as amended on November 15, 1990, and the final conformity rule (40 CFR Parts 51 and 93).

Draft Conformity Timeline

- December 7, 2022: Pre-Consensus Conference Call/TAC and TPC announcement to start new Conformity.
- January 2023: review for Model Network (H-GAC/TxDOT/METRO) and Pre-Analysis Consensus Plan.
- January 2023: Travel Demand Model Runs
- February 2023: Air Quality Conformity Model Runs
- March 2023: TAC/TPC Conformity Preview for the RTP and TIP
- March 2023: Public comment period – March 15-April 17, 2023 – Public meeting: March 21st
- April 2023: TAC Recommend Conformity approval to TPC
- April 2023: TPC Approves Conformity
- End of April 2023: Request Partner Review/Approval -- Approval will usually be 3 months after.

ACTION

Recommend for Transportation Policy Council approval of Air Quality Conformity Analysis.



Resolution

No. 2023-20

AUTHORIZING ADOPTION OF TRANSPORTATION AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS FOR THE 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the eight-county Houston-Galveston Metropolitan Planning Area by the Governor of Texas in accordance with federal law; and,

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Planning Area includes all of Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller Counties; and,

WHEREAS, the Transportation Policy Council (TPC), comprised primarily of local elected officials, is the regional transportation policy body associated with the H-GAC and continues to be the regional forum for cooperative decisions on transportation; and,

WHEREAS, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) assigns the MPO the responsibility for developing and maintaining the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program and their periodic updates; and,

WHEREAS, the IIJA Act requires the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program include a financial plan to demonstrate the consistency of proposed transportation investments with available and projected sources of revenue; and,

WHEREAS, the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program were developed using the most recent federal guidance and applicable regulations; and,

WHEREAS, the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update (RTP Update) was developed in cooperation with local governments, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO), and other transportation agencies; and,

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898 mandate nondiscrimination and analysis of impacts to protected populations for all federally funded projects; and,

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated an eight-county area coterminous with the Metropolitan Planning Area as severe nonattainment under the 2008 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for the pollutant ozone, effective November 7, 2022; and,

WHEREAS, the EPA has designated a six-county area coterminous with the Metropolitan Planning Area as moderate nonattainment under the 2015 8-hour NAAQS for the pollutant ozone, effective November 7, 2022; and,

WHEREAS, technical analysis has determined the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update conforms to motor vehicle emissions budgets contained in *Revisions to the State Implementation Plan for the Control of Ozone Air Pollution, Houston/Galveston/Brazoria Ozone Nonattainment Area*; and,

WHEREAS, expeditious implementation of the transportation control measures identified in the applicable State Implementation Plan has been accomplished and documented; and

WHEREAS, the IJA Act and Clean Air Act regulations require information regarding the development of the RTP and the transportation conformity analysis be available for public comment according to the adopted MPO public participation plan; and,

WHEREAS, the transportation facilities, services and projects recommended in the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update have been made available to the public in compliance with H-GAC's *Public Participation Plan*.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

THE TRANSPORTATION POLICY COUNCIL FOR THE HOUSTON-GALVESTON TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AREA ADOPTS THE 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE; AND

THE 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN IS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE 1990 U.S. CLEAN AIR ACT AS AMENDED; AND

THE 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE SATISFIES PLANNING REQUIREMENTS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT INCLUDING APPLICABLE PROVISIONS WITHIN THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AND EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 28th day of April 2023, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Transportation Policy Council for the Houston-Galveston Transportation Management Area.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

Hon. David Robinson, Chairman
Transportation Policy Council

Hon. Nancy Arnold, Secretary
Transportation Policy Council