

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Subcommittee Meeting**

Houston-Galveston Area Council
Online Meeting\Conference Call
Friday February 11, 2022
9:30 AM

AGENDA

1. Subcommittee Roll Call

2. Previous Meeting Summary (*A Summary of the February 11, 2022 Meeting is Posted on H-GAC Website*)

3. 2023-2026 TIP Development Update

Staff will update the Subcommittee on the next steps in the development of the 2023-2026 TIP document.

4. Call for Project Development Update

Staff will walk through the Call for Projects process and components.

5. Comments and Discussion.

6. Announcements

- TAC Meeting – February 16, 2022, 9:30 a.m., Teleconference (Zoom)
- TPC Meeting – February 25, 2021, 9:30 a.m., Teleconference (Zoom)
- TIP Subcommittee Meeting – March 2, 2022, 1:30 p.m., Teleconference (Zoom)

7. Adjourn

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Friday, February 11, 2022 – 9:30am
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Online Meeting (Teams Platform)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Veronica Chapa-Gorczyński – East End District
Christopher Sims – City of League City
Cory Taylor – Chambers County
David Douglas – Liberty County
Frank Simoneaux – City of Baytown
Loyd Smith – Harris County
Monique Johnson – City of Sugarland
Robert Upton PE – City of Pearland
Veronica Davis – City of Houston-PW
Yancy Scott – Waller County
Sherry Weesner – TIRZ 5/Memorial Heights
Mike Wilson – Port Freeport
Andy Mao – TxDOT-HOU
Scott Ayres – TxDOT-BMT
Ruthanne Haut – The Woodlands Township

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Jonathan Brooks – LINK Houston
Ricardo Villagrand – City of Mont Belvieu
Krystal Lastrape – City of Sugarland
Todd Hoover – City of Missouri City
Perri D'Armond – Fort Bend County
David Wurdlow – City of Houston-PW
Andrea French – TAG-Houston Region
Jon Branson – City of Texas City
Catherine McCreight – TxDOT-HOU
Alan Clark – METRO
Vernon Chambers – Harris County

Item 1: Subcommittee Roll Call

The meeting started with a roll call to determine the members and/or alternatives present after which Veronica Chapa-Gorczyński, the Chair, gave a brief welcome statement and laid a preface for the day.

Item 2: Previous Meeting Summary

Members were encouraged to review the January 2022 meeting summary posted on the H-GAC Website, and to forward any changes to staff so the record could be corrected.

Item 3: 2023-2026 TIP Development Update

Adam Beckom reminded Subcommittee members that the 2023-2026 TIP was in preparation and that staff were finalizing the draft project lists. According to the TIP development timeline, the public meeting/public comment phase will begin in March 2022. Adam urged agencies with active projects to be responsive to staff email communications, to ensure that H-GAC is ready for the public comment period. It is anticipated that the 2023-2026 TIP listings will be taken to TACVTPC for action in May 2022, in order to meet the required June submittal to the State, for inclusion in the STIP.

Item 4: Call for Projects Development Update

In this update, Vishu Lingala outlined the logistics/overall process involved in the Call for Projects. He defined the eligible sponsors, project submission guidelines, the programming and application phases, investment categories, and the benefit-cost analysis process. Vishu next identified four “core” elements of the call for projects, considered critical to a successful completion of the process. Getting an early resolution of these issues would expediate finalization of the contingent and more detailed decisions to come. Staff would be looking to get subcommittee recommendation to take proposals on these four items to the TAC. The items are:

1. Scoring splits between benefit-cost analysis and planning factors for all investment categories;
2. Investment category definitions;
3. The rural funding allocation and ranking process; and
4. Funding targets and ranges.

Craig Raborn reviewed the rural funding allocation topic, focusing on the two scoring options.

1. Option One creates a separate ranking process just for rural projects, which is what staff proposed originally. Rural projects would be ranked in descending order and selected from the list until the 9% funding floor is attained.
2. Option Two combines both rural and urban projects in a singular ranking process based on the same planning factors and benefit-cost analysis. Both rural and urban projects would be scored and ranked on the same scale and selected in descending order until the available budget or targets have been met. Projects in rural areas would still be guaranteed the 9% funding floor. If, however, the 9% rural funding floor has not been met, urban projects down the list may be bumped in order to reach the floor.

After an extended session of comments by members of the subcommittee, Craig gave a summary of the thoughts expressed, which were largely in favor of a tweaked version of the second option.

Craig concluded his presentation with a discussion on the ‘bonus’ points system and the minimum point threshold.

It was decided to continue the discussions during the TIP subcommittee meeting on March 2, 2022.

Item 5: Comments and Discussion

- Given the recommendation that sequential or end-to-end (corridor) projects that cut across jurisdiction boundaries be scored together, does that lock them in as a single project for the purposes of programming and project management or would the individual entities have to enter discussions on a resolution before the project enters the TIP?
- [From preceding question] In the application process, how would one account for cost\benefit differences such as gaps in opening dates between the different segments of the corridor project?
- Some discussion may be worthwhile to consider about qualifying the requirement that short range projects must have a complete and approved environmental at time of project submittal seeing as how the different environmental review standards involve a wide range of timelines and demand different levels of documentation for obtaining approval.
- The end of the planning process is usually the environmental review. There are concerns over the requirement of getting letters of support from overlapping jurisdictions. Many eligible entities are a creation of the development community (e.g., special districts) who may not understand the kind of engagement that planning is supposed to accomplish. With this in mind, what kind of steps, documents, or other things would H-GAC be looking for, to show a sponsor has completed due diligence in planning?
- Benefit/Cost analysis usually involves a comparison of dollar values. How would it work where, as in this case, evaluation is based on a point system?
- If a submission is a “Complete Streets” project where, due to the age of the facility, roadway reconstruction greater than just resurfacing or panel replacements is needed, would this still be considered a “Maintain” category project?
- Safety appears to be different from the other set-aside categories as it might involve capital expenditure. This would need further clarification.
- Are Safety set-aside funds currently in the program or are they new, and what kind of projects would be eligible for this program?
- Have staff thought about the new categories of funding (e.g., electrification) that would be made available through the infrastructure bill? Will this be addressed in this program call or a later call?
- The 9% target in practical terms may be creating a ceiling just as much as it establishes a floor!
- If a project runs through both a rural and an urban region – how does one define the kind of project it is?
- Nothing in the discussions prohibit a project sponsor from deciding what category to participate in. That means a project located in a rural area may be submitted for consideration out of the general funding mix rather than the 9%.
- There is a review to ensure that the higher scoring projects are fundable within the constraints of the funding sources. It is not unusual that a project with a lower score is selected over a project with a higher score. This occurs mostly because of constraints of the funding source, a good example of which is the CMAQ.
- The merged ranking option allows the possibility of additional funding going to exceptional projects in rural areas – thereby exceeding the 9% floor.
- Less meritorious rural projects being selected over higher scoring urban projects is an outcome

inherent in the policy council decision to create a floor for rural projects, not a bug. The methodology is an outcome-based balancing scale which does not necessarily have to be tweaked to create a rural-urban tilt. The merged ranking approach is simple, transparent, and easier to follow.

- Should the minimum score be the same for both categories of projects?
- The ceiling vs. floor comments may not be most concerning because the funding amounts vary from year to year. Being sensitive to all the comments, the second option is a long way closer to what everybody wants. People in the rural areas would get more money and get more projects done. We need to be cognizant of the other goal, which is to be ready by April.
- The reason for option one was that true rural projects do not compete head-to-head with the urban projects, and they look much different. Being able to compete in other categories should not count against the 9% floor for rural projects. The larger rural projects that can compete head-to-head with the urban projects may not really be benefiting the rural population. Freeways dumping out to the rural area is all about urban traffic. Too many of these projects would deplete the 9% rapidly.
- People who live in the rural areas should give feedback as to what makes sense for their communities.
- We can't solve all the refinements that are needed today. One of the areas of concerns for rural local governments was active transportation. H-GAC could look back at past experience and see categories in which rural projects did not compete well. A possible line of refinements would be to designate a set-aside from the 9% to make sure these categories of projects can be funded in the rural areas.
- For those projects that fall into both rural and urban areas, could the project be counted as urban projects since most of the benefit would go to the urban area, but would rapidly deplete the rural allocation is identified as rural.
- Regarding the use of bonus points, the decision would have to come from my agency's governing board. This decision process has the potential to be contentious because of the different interests represented on the board.
- The policy council receives the decisions of the subcommittees and TAC as a recommendation, and they may make tweaks to them, usually only in extenuating circumstances. If it becomes impossible to arrive at a recommended decision, the council may take action as they chose.

Item 6: Announcements

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Item 7 Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.