

8D. TITLE VI/ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AWARENESS INITIATIVE

**BACKGROUND**

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Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice mandates apply broadly to the programs and activities of state and local government agencies and other organizations that receive federal financial assistance; and are embedded in the laws and regulations that govern transportation planning. To remain eligible for federal funds, the Houston-Galveston Area Council and other U.S. DOT recipients must periodically certify that they are complying with these federal laws and regulations.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

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The MPO is starting a “Title VI/Environmental Justice Awareness Initiative – Connecting Communities” program that will help public agencies understand their responsibilities as participants in the federal transportation planning and funding process, and to encourage greater participation by members of local communities that have been historically underrepresented in the planning process.

The initiative launches in February 2023 with a seminar on February 16 titled “Connecting Communities: The Role of Title VI and Environmental Justice in Transportation Planning.” The event will provide a broad overview of best practices for achieving equity in transportation and highlight ways the local governments can meet their Title VI and Environmental Justice requirements.

As part of the initiative, H-GAC will update the federally required Language Assistance Plan (LAP). Language can be a significant barrier to understanding vital information about federally funded programs and activities; and to meaningful participation in the transportation planning process.

Expected outcomes of the Title VI/Environmental Justice Awareness Initiative include:

- Educate the public on the MPO’s role in the regional transportation planning process;
- Expand public involvement by establishing dialogue with underrepresented communities;
- Spread information about the free language assistance services available to non-English speakers;
- Inform stakeholders of the opportunity to report discrimination through the external complaint system, required by Title VI; and
- Educate MPO staff and regional transportation partners of their nondiscrimination responsibilities as recipients of Federal financial assistance.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

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For Information and Discussion.