

9. TRANSPORTATION AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY STATUS 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 (HGB) Nonattainment Area.

The current transportation conformity determination for the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria region received federal approval on November 4, 2022. However, every four years the Houston-Galveston Metropolitan Planning Organization is required to adopt a new Regional Transportation Plan, and each new RTP requires a new conformity determination. The Transportation Policy Council adopted the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan in April 2019, and the conformity determination for that Plan was approved on August 2, 2019.

A new conformity determination was approved by the Transportation Policy Council on April 23, 2023, as part of adopting the 2045 RTP Update. This conformity analysis for the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update demonstrated compliance to the latest motor vehicle emissions budgets identified for the HGB region in the air quality State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the 2008 8-hr Ozone Standard. The 2045 RTP Update and conformity determination were submitted to FHWA and H-GAC's conformity partners on May 1, 2023.

CURRENT SITUATION

The FHWA and conformity partners' review of the newly-adopted 2045 RTP Update and conformity determination was not completed before the August 2, 2023 deadline. Consequently, the previous RTP and conformity determination expired on August 2, 2023, and FHWA has initiated a Conformity Lapse Grace Period while FHWA and the conformity partners complete their review and issue a new conformity determination.

During a conformity lapse grace period the most recently conforming RTP and TIP remain valid and projects may continue to advance. Additionally, some administrative modifications to the RTP and TIP may advance. However, no amendments to the RTP or TIP can be made while the conformity lapse grace period continues.

Staff will provide an update on the status of the conformity determination review and the conformity lapse grace period.

ACTION

Information and Discussion Only.