

**Regional Transit Coordination (RTC) Subcommittee
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Online Meeting/Conference Call
Thursday, January 11, 2024
9:30-11:00 AM**

Agenda

1. Introductions and Certification of Quorum (9) – Ruthanne Haut, The Woodlands Township, Chair
2. Public Comments
3. Action Items:
 - 3.1 Approval of RTC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes of November 2, 2023
 - 3.2 Endorsement of Updated RCTP Transit Needs Index – Sandy Klanfer, H-GAC
 - 3.3 Endorsement of H-GAC Application for Planning Grant Assistance – Sandy Klanfer, H-GAC
4. Information (and Potential Action) Items: (10 minutes or less each)
 - 4.1 Endorsement of Transit Asset Management Targets – Chris Whaley, H-GAC
5. Action Items: (10 minutes or less each)
 - 5.1 Coordinated Planning
 - 5.1a Regional Transit Connectivity Update – Reggie Brown, METRO
 - 5.1b TIP Project Selection Process Update – Vishu Lingala, H-GAC
6. Transit and Human Service Agency Reports (5 minutes or less each)

2024 RTC Subcommittee Meeting Dates:

April 11, 2024

July 11, 2024

October 10, 2024

REGIONAL TRANSIT COORDINATION SUBCOMMITTEE

SPECIAL CALL MEETING MINUTES Thursday, November 2, 2023 – 9:30-11:00am Houston-Galveston Area Council Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ruthanne Haut (Chair) – The Woodlands Township
Sharon Moses-Burnside – City of Houston Planning
Melanie Beaman – City of Sugar Land
Philip Salerno – Greater Inwood Super Neighborhood
Thomas Holstein – BakerRipley
Lanny Brown – Community Health Network
Vernon Chambers – Harris County Transit
Perri D’Armond – Fort Bend County Transit
Jo Marlow – Brazos Transit District
Claudia Wicks – Colorado Valley Transit
Sean Middleton – Gulf Coast Transit District

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Brandon Mosely – City of Houston
Huey German -Wilson – Northeast Houston
Redevelopment Council
Ashley Newell – Mounting Horizons

OTHERS PRESENT

Brenda Bustillos – TxDOT
Arnold Vowles – TxDOT
Travis Madison – TxDOT
Michael Dietz - TxDOT
Denise Wendler – METRO
Joseph Bolletino – Conroe
Jessica Hawkinson – Island Transit

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT

Jamila Owens
Thomas Gray
Chris Whaley
Sandy Klanfer
Ben Finley
Lucinda Martinez
Veronica Waller

BRIEFING

Overview

RTCS Members and Alternates met virtually by teleconference. At this Special Call meeting, the Subcommittee received updates on Transit Asset Management (TAM) plans, proposed changes to the RTCP’s Transit Need Index (TNI), and the Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan effort being undertaken by TxDOT.

INTRODUCTIONS AND CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM

ITEM 1 – Ruthanne Haut, Chair, The Woodlands Township, convened the meeting at 9:31 AM. Roll was called by H-GAC staff and a quorum was certified.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ITEM 2 – There were no public comments presented to the Subcommittee.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 3.1 – Approval of RTC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes of October 5, 2023

Ms. Haut requested a motion to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2023 meeting of the Subcommittee.

Action Item Motion: moved by Sharon Moses-Burnside, seconded by Perri D'Armond. Action Item approved.

INFORMATION ITEMS

ITEM 4.1a – Transit Asset Management Update – Chris Whaley, H-GAC

Chris Whaley provided an overview of the Transit Asset Management process, which is designed to ensure a State of Good Repair for the region's transit providers. Whaley described the performance measures used for each asset category and presented a history of the region's TAM performance (targets and actuals) by year. He updated the Subcommittee as to the current status of TAM reports received from the region's providers. The RTCS is expected to endorse the TAM targets in January.

There were no questions or comments.

ITEM 4.1b – RCTP Transit Needs Index – Sandy Klanfer, H-GAC

Sandy Klanfer provided the Subcommittee with an update on the proposal to revise the Transit Need Index being used for the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan, to more accurately analyze transit need and availability within the region. The proposed new TNI would focus on transit availability by frequency and get away from the concept of "met" and "unmet" need. Klanfer showed the Subcommittee a series of updated maps that showed what the new TNI might look like, while acknowledging limitations in the data such as the size of census block groups used for analysis, especially in rural areas. The RTCS is expected to endorse the new TNI in January.

Perri D'Armond noted that Fort Bend Transit provides countywide demand response service that did not appear to be reflected in Mr. Klanfer's service map. Claudia Wicks noted that countywide demand response service in Colorado Valley Transit District's service area was not reflected in the map, either. Mr. Klanfer acknowledged that the missing services may have been an oversight on the part of H-GAC staff and would be corrected.

Ruthanne Haut noted that Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County also provided countywide demand response service that was not shown on the service map. Mr. Klanfer agreed but noted that, unlike the previously-discussed Fort Bend and Colorado Valley demand response services, Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County is a service that is focused on the needs of seniors and is not available to the general public.

Ashley Newell asked if a map could be created that showed demand response services focused on elderly, disabled and other populations but not available to the general public. Mr. Klanfer said that was something H-GAC Staff could take a look at, but that it would take time to gather data given the number of nonprofit and social service providers in the region.

Klanfer continued his presentation by discussing staff's regional mid-day trip evaluation, which focused on regional connectivity needs by analyzing weekday mid-day (i.e. off-peak) trips to major activity centers such as Downtown Houston and the Texas Medical Center. Most of the mid-day trips to and from these activity centers start or end in Harris County, although enough trips are generated to or from Montgomery, Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties to warrant additional study.

Perri D'Armond asked if H-GAC staff had information on the purpose of the mid-day trips, e.g. were they work commutes or for some other purpose. Klanfer answered that the data was for all trips, regardless of purpose. D'Armond replied that she would like to see a more detailed trip breakdown by origin and destination, if possible, and noted that the midday service to and from the Texas Medical Center that Fort Bend County provides sees "robust" ridership.

ITEM 4.2a TxDOT Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan – Michael Dietz

Michael Dietz, of the Texas Department of Transportation's Public Transportation Division, provided an overview of the Statewide Multimodal Transit Plan. Dietz discussed its purpose, its timeline and current status, engagement activities accomplished to date, and initial input received from stakeholder groups. He encouraged transit providers to take the community survey, which closes November 17th, and provided a link for the survey in the meeting chat.

Perri D'Armond, who is on the Plan's Steering Committee, offered to get further information about the Plan to Subcommittee members. She also suggested that TxDOT reach out to contractors to get their input. Dietz agreed and said TxDOT hoped to include contractors as the plan moves forward.

Ashley Newell suggested that TxDOT reach out to Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living and the Texas Council for Development Disabilities to gather their input as well.

Jamila Owens asked if TxDOT had a flyer or other material that regional providers could share with their stakeholders. Dietz provided a link to a study fact sheet in the meeting chat.

AGENCY REPORTS

ITEM 5 – Transit and Human Service Agency Reports

Ms. Haut invited Subcommittee members to briefly give updates on their agency efforts.

Thomas Gray thanked regional transit providers for their assistance in completing the ridership survey for the third quarter of 2023. He reported that regional fixed-route transit ridership continues to increase, but as of September 2023 was still only 85% of September 2019 (pre-pandemic) ridership levels. Gray noted that the survey for the fourth quarter of 2023 will be sent to providers in January 2024, and may contain additional questions about agency fleet characteristics, such as the number of vehicles powered by alternative fuels.

Ben Finley, a senior air quality program coordinator at H-GAC, followed up by explaining that H-GAC staff is tasked with reporting on regional fleet characteristics, such as alternative fuel use; however, they haven't always received a good response from regional transit providers. He said that "piggy-backing" onto the next quarterly ridership survey could be a way to get a better response from regional providers.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Haut adjourned the meeting at 10:38 AM.

Next RTCS Meeting – 9:30 AM on Thursday, January 11, 2024



9

Goals

- More accurately analyze transit need and availability in the region for everyone
- Address public and stakeholder comments about previous version
- Account for specialized and general-public services
 - A majority of the region's population does not qualify for specialized services

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10

Gathering Feedback

- H-GAC staff have spent several months developing this proposed methodology
- Presented this information to a variety of stakeholders in Fall 2023
 - Regional Transit Coordination Sub-Committee
 - Paratransit/NEMT Advisory Workgroup
 - Informal group of transit agency stakeholders
- Each group provided feedback which was used to refine and improve the methodology

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11

New Analysis

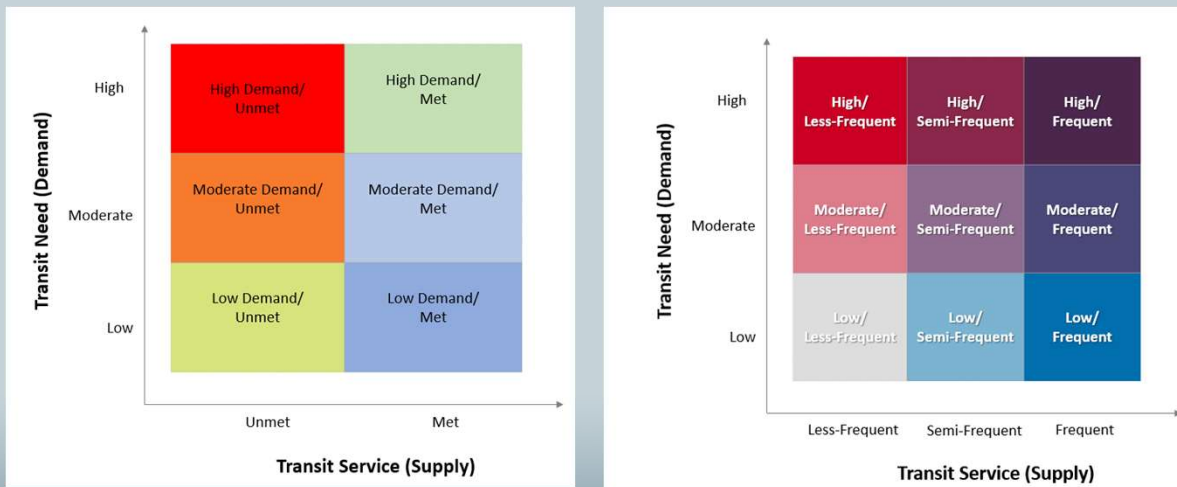
- We looked at a variety of different options for how we might re-examine the idea of transit need and transit quality
- The core problem: we were trying to deem transit need “met” or “unmet” in each block group based on limited data and limited public input
- Instead of “met” or “unmet” transit need, new methodology uses a frequency-based transit availability metric

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12

New Analysis



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13

Transit Availability

- **“Frequent”**
 - High-Capacity Transit, including all Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail (LRT) services
 - Limited-stop express buses, including commuter-focused park and ride services
 - Local bus services with off-peak headways of 15 minutes or less
- **“Semi-Frequent”**
 - Local bus services with off-peak headways between 16 and 30 minutes
- **“Less Frequent”**
 - Flex zone (demand-response)
 - Local bus services with off-peak headways greater than 30 minutes

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14

Defining Public Transportation

- “Regular, continuing shared-ride surface transportation services that are open to the general public or open to a segment of the general public defined by age, disability, or low income.”



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15

Proposed New Methodology

- Document all services provided by local governments/transit agencies
 - Each agency will need to provide a list of services they fund
 - Will need to include coverage area and populations served
 - Ideally, agencies will be able to provide shapefiles of these services
 - H-GAC will then need to contact each provider, confirm coverage area and populations served
 - Will then need to generate a shapefile of the coverage area if one can't be provided

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16

Proposed New Methodology

- Map all services provided or funded by local governments and transit agencies
- A separate map will document just those services provided to the general public
 - This will be the basis for transit availability index
- Demand-response services will continue to be classified as “less frequent”
 - These are not “show up and go” services, because they require advance booking

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17

Regional Mid-Day Trip Evaluation

- Currently, there is limited regional service that crosses county lines to and from major activity centers
 - Peak-hour, peak-direction only
- Used H-GAC’s origin-destination data to analyze the number of weekday mid-day trips (9 AM-3 PM) to and from the two biggest regional activity centers
 - Downtown Houston
 - Texas Medical Center
 - These were the destinations most commonly cited

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18

Regional Mid-Day Trip Evaluation

- This data showed the demand for travel to and from these destinations during these periods.
 - Serves as a starting point for understanding demand for bus service specifically
- Initial analysis: some counties generate enough demand to/from these activity centers to warrant additional study
- Further study would be needed to determine feasibility
 - H-GAC is planning a regional bus study, expected to start in 2024



Actions Requested

- Endorse H-GAC's new proposed methodology for the Transit Need Index/Transit Accessibility Matrix
- Endorse H-GAC's methodology for high-level estimates of regional mid-day trip demand



Support for H-GAC Planning Grant Application

January 2024

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22

Background

- TxDOT coordinated call for 5304 planning grant funds
- Projects must connect to goals, objectives, or recommendations from region's most recent Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan

Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan
2022-2026

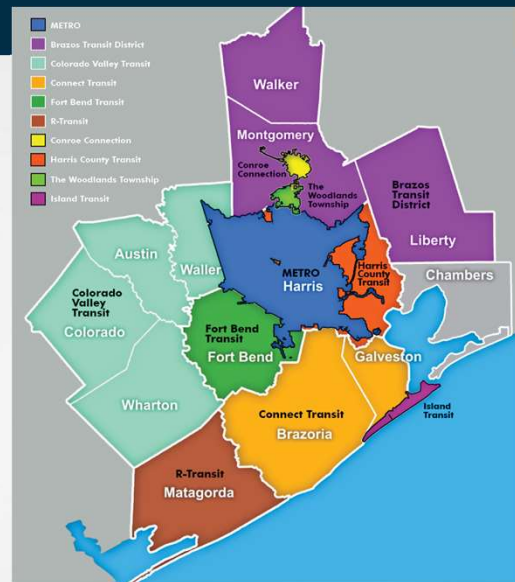
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Published February 2022

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23

Background

- Funds are distributed every two years: previous call was in 2022
- An opportunity to get planning funds that can be used across the entire 13-county region



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24

Proposed Use of Funds

- Expand H-GAC's planned Regional Bus Study to cover the 13-county region
- Develop a plan to help the region transition to a full-fledged mobility management program



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25

Action

- Authorize the Committee Chair to sign a letter of support for H-GAC's application for 5304 planning grant funds from TxDOT

(Letter is in meeting packet)

RTCS Update Regional Fare System

January 2024

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1

Project Components

- **Mobile Ticketing**
 - Harris County and Fort Bend County Transit went live in the Q Ticketing app September 2023
 - Additional partner integrations suspended until after the new fare system go-live
- **Regional Data Management**
 - Partners are combining their GTFS schedules and alerts in METRO's system allowing coordinated trip planning in the region
 - Harris County and Fort Bend are in final stages of integration
- **Automated Fare Collection System**
 - A central management system that will allow Partners to consolidate fare structures and manage customer accounts
 - Includes equipment upgrades such as: validators, TVMs and fareboxes

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2

Regional Assessment and Planning

- Completed preliminary partner assessments and provided feedback
- All agencies expressed general interest in the regional program
- Funding was approved to support the integration of the system backbone and vehicle validators
- Conducting follow-up meetings with each agency to confirm current position and identify future considerations
- Conducting discussions with INIT to determine a partner integration strategy



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3

Fare Collection System

Current Status:

- Completed design of backend software and equipment
- Completed installation of validators on METRO's (1200) fixed route buses, planning for METROLift and curb2curb fleets in early 2024
- Manufacturing and testing Ticket Vending Machines (TVM). Installation to begin Q1-2024
- Designing Farebox equipment and software. Installation scheduled late 2024
- Finalizing design of Q Card replacement media (ONE card) and preparing for retail network implementation
- Preparing for System Integration Testing and Pilot testing to occur early 2024



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Next Steps

- **Phase 1**
 - Complete development and testing of the backend system and METRO go-live
- **Phase 2**
 - Formalize strategy to integrate regional partners into desired system components
 - Regional Data Management
 - Mobile Ticketing
 - Automated Fare Collection
 - Complete ILAs between METRO and regional partners
 - Determine a maintenance and support strategy with partners and H-GAC
 - Purchase, install and integrate bus validators for regional partner.
(requires infrastructure for network communications and backend integration)
- **Long Term**
 - Reassess need for ticket vending machines and fareboxes after the initial rollout



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5

Questions?



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6



Project Selection Process Update



Transportation Policy Council
January 11, 2024

Investment Categories

- Selection Process in progress
 - High Growth Area Needs
 - Resiliency and State of Good Repair
 - Operational Improvements and Congestion Management
 - Transit
 - Major Projects
- Evaluation criteria available at <https://www.h-gac.com/transportation-project-selection-process>
- Sponsors can request portal accounts by sending an email to Vishu.Lingala @h-gac.com

Next Steps

Selection Step	Month 2024
Criteria questionnaires	Feb
Evaluation scoring & ranking	Feb/March
Evaluation score validation	Feb/March
Benefit-cost analysis (BCA)	March/April
Project readiness	March/April
BCA scoring & ranking	May/June
BCA validation & final draft ranking	June/July
Anticipated recommendation	August

Available Funding by Invest. Category

Investment Category	Funding Instruction	Available Funding (\$M)
Regional Goods Movement	12%	\$156
High Growth Area Needs	25%	\$324
Major Projects	30%	\$389
Operational Improvements & Congestion Management	13%	\$168
Resiliency & State of Good Repair	5%	\$65
Transit	7.5%	\$97
Active Transportation	7.5%	\$97
Safety	\$30/Year	\$300
Total		\$1,596
* Total available funding for the next 5 investment categories		\$1,043

Contacts



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Climate Pollution Reduction Program

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) has received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to lead a regional climate action planning effort.

Are you a public agency, local government, university, school district, public transit provider, public port, other governmental agency or sponsored by one of these entities and have an idea for a community-scale project? H-GAC is seeking project ideas and proposals to include in the regional climate action plans.

CALL FOR PROJECTS

The agency envisions six general categories for included projects:

- Waste, Water and Sustainable Materials
- Carbon Removal
- Agriculture
- Industrial
- Buildings
- Electric Power
- Transportation



<https://bit.ly/CPRG-CallforProjects>

SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

If you have an idea for a community-scale GHG or air pollution reduction project that is located within the H-GAC thirteen county region, please register and complete the CPRG Call for Projects registration form.

Once registered, you may log into the CPRG Call for Projects Online Application Portal and submit one or more online applications.

The online application process is open now through January 15, 2024, at 5 p.m.

GET IN TOUCH

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