

**MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER
TRANSITION COMMITTEE ON TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION**

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MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER
CITY OF HOUSTON



**TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION TRANSITION
COMMITTEE**

March 01, 2016

Chair:
Ramesh Gunda, Gunda Corporation

Co-Chair:
Kendall Miller, Uptown Houston District

Traffic and Transportation

MAIN TOPICS

- Multi-modal transportation plan that is coordinated with other agencies and development community. Funding and schedule for the implementation of Plan
- Short Term Transportation Improvements such as Critical Corridors, Traffic Management, Incident Management and Signal Timing etc.
- METRO Operational Efficiency and Transparency

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP:

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Co-Chair: Kendall Miller, Uptown Houston District
Liaison: Debra Baker, Baker Wotring

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Meera Victor, Carollo Engineers
Michael Russo, Seafarer International Union
Rashad Cave, Central Care
Robert Muhammad, NTE Planning
Tiko Reynolds-Hausman, TKO Biz Solutions
Tom Forestier, Winstead PC

RESOURCES:

Kathryn McNeil, Theater District Houston
Jennifer Pena, Gunda Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Multi-modal transportation plan that is coordinated with other agencies and development community. Funding and schedule for the implementation of Plan.**

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop a Citywide Multi-modal Transportation Plan
 - ✓ New Transportation Executive
 - ✓ Provide funding support for Gulf Coast Rail District
 - ✓ Engage early in IH 45 Corridor Development Program
- **Short Term Transportation Improvements such as Critical Corridors, Traffic Management, Incident Management and Signal Timing etc.**

Recommendations:

- ✓ Intersection Improvements
 - ✓ Traffic Signal Timing
 - ✓ Parking Restrictions
 - ✓ Pedestrian/Bike Improvements
 - ✓ Panel Replacement
 - ✓ Safe-clear
 - ✓ Travel Demand Management
- **METRO Operational Efficiency and Transparency**

Recommendations:

- ✓ Develop Mission Statement and Vision
- ✓ Review Impact of Reimagining on the areas that lost transit service
- ✓ Citizen Advisory Board
- ✓ US 290 two-way HOT Lanes
- ✓ New Public Referendum
- ✓ Interagency Partnerships
- ✓ Improve Procurement and Delivery Process

ISSUE ANALYSIS

ISSUE NO. 1: Multi-modal transportation plan that is coordinated with other agencies and development community. Funding and schedule for the implementation of Plan

Currently City of Houston does not have a well-coordinated multi-modal plan that serves as a blue print for our transportation and infrastructure investment. The City has a Rebuild Houston Infrastructure Plan, Utility Masterplans, and now Bikeway Plan, but most of these plans were created in isolation and did not consider other modes or agencies. There is no pedestrian masterplan or transit strategy for the entire City.

Most major American cities have moved toward comprehensive, multimodal transportation plans, with the Great Streets LA Plan¹ being the most recent, excellent example. The first meeting of the Plan Houston Implementation Committee clearly found that a comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan should be a priority action in the first year of Plan Houston to address population growth.

It is a great opportunity for City of Houston to show leadership on transportation issues by undertaking a Multi-modal Transportation Plan that serves City of Houston and beyond. This Plan will start with bringing together current single mode plans, Complete Streets, as well as identify gaps, opportunities and challenges. This Plan will identify short term improvements along with mid-term solutions and long term strategies. It is important to bring other agencies such as HGAC, METRO, Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), Counties, Gulf Coast Rail District, Railroads and Port of Houston to the table at the start of the plan development. It is also very important to engage stakeholders, civic organizations, developers and the general public throughout the process. Development of a comprehensive Multi-modal Transportation Plan is a key to compete well for federal funding for the implementation of elements of the Plan as the benefits of the improvements can be calculated on a City-wide basis. This Plan is meant to be a living document providing flexibility to adapt to market and economic conditions.

This task should be one of the top priorities for the proposed Transportation Executive in the Mayor's office. This executive's duties and responsibilities are not included in this discussion but it is anticipated that resources from the Traffic & Transportation Division of Public Works & Engineering Department and Planning Division of Planning & Development Department would be required in the development of the Multi-modal Transportation Plan. There is no need to change any laws to develop this Plan, however, the current Major Thoroughfare Plan may need to be amended based on recommendations from the Multi-modal Transportation Plan.

We would suggest budgeting two to three million dollars over a two-year period for this effort based on costs of similar studies conducted in other cities. However, currently there are dollars budgeted for various elements of the Plan. HGAC has some planning dollars budgeted for these types of initiatives. METRO and TXDOT may also be able to contribute some dollars and resources towards this effort. Implementation of the recommended projects from the plan can be funded by Rebuild Houston dollars along with Federal grants, Transportation Infrastructure

Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loans, State Infrastructure Bank loans, Texas Proposition 7 dollars and traffic impact fee, etc.

Provide financial support for Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) in accomplishing its mission. Currently there is no source of dedicated funding for GCRD. Provide City of Houston Cost sharing of \$15 M to fund West Belt Railroad Grade Separations Project in east Houston. HGAC TIP and Railroads together are contributing \$54 M towards this project. Provide dependable funding source for GCRD through Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) Funds, Title Fees or Local Option. All of these funding options require a change of law and/or possible public referendum.

City of Houston should closely work with TXDOT on development of IH 45 corridor. It is very important for the City to study the impacts of this project on City's infrastructure and require TXDOT to include all mitigation measures as part of the project.

ISSUE NO. 2: Short Term Transportation Improvements such as Critical Corridors, Traffic Management, Incident Management and Signal Timing etc.

Due to nature of infrastructure planning, engineering and construction, it takes years to improve a corridor or roadway after identifying the problems. Ten to twenty percent of Transportation and Infrastructure budget should be allocated to short term transportation improvements. It is an opportunity to take the success of pothole repairs to the next step. Identify bottlenecks, hotspots and deficiencies and develop short term mitigation measures that can be implemented in less than a year. These improvements can be panel replacements, addition of turn lanes, signalization, signal equipment upgrades, parking restrictions, safe pedestrian crossings, pedestrian tables and neighborhood greenways. These improvements can be implemented quickly because they have less impact on properties, little or no right of way requirements and little construction. Federal Highway Administration recommends retiming traffic signals every three years to optimize the capacity of the intersections. It is recommended that City of Houston takes up one-third of the traffic signals every year to re-time. Think of this like an oil change for your car. Institute of Transportation Engineers publication estimates traffic signal retiming every three years provides a benefit-cost ratio of 40 to 1. The Public Works & Engineering Department would be involved in implementing these recommendations. There is no need to change any laws to implement these recommendations, however, current Rebuild Houston criteria for selection of projects may need to be amended to fund these improvements. Roughly ten to twenty million dollars per year should be budgeted for these improvements. These improvements can be funded by the Rebuild Houston program and Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grants.

City should recommit resources to Safe-clear towing program (Incident Management) and consider expanding from freeways to some of the critical major thoroughfares. Capacity of freeways and critical thoroughfares are greatly impacted by disabled cars and accidents. The Safe-clear towing program can reduce these impacts greatly. The Traffic & Transportation Division of Public Works & Engineering Department would be involved in implementing these recommendations. There is no need to change any laws to implement these recommendations. HGAC and TXDOT have funding for the freeway Safe-clear program for next ten years, METRO provides resources for dispatching tow trucks and Harris County provides funds for Motorist Assistance Program (MAP). HGAC may be willing to expand their funding to include critical thoroughfares.

Continue to encourage employers to implement flexible work hours and other Travel Demand Management techniques to reduce peak period traffic congestion. HGAC can provide resources for this campaign.

ISSUE NO. 3: METRO Operational Efficiency and Transparency

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has been in the news for good reasons, however more often for wrong reasons. This could be because of project delays, LRT Axle issues, Axle Counter issues, Buy America and procurement issues. Some of these issues are inherited by current administration. METRO has made great progress in achieving financial transparency and received the Texas Comptroller Leadership Circle Award.

METRO has recently implemented its first ever Reimagining of their Bus Service. METRO reported an increase in boardings since the implementation of the program. Concerns have been raised about loss of transit service for certain areas due to Reimagining formula of 80% ridership/20% coverage. Both supporters and critics of Reimagining have valid arguments on why it is working or not working. Supporters say boardings have increased since implementation of Reimagining of Bus Service and critics say boardings increased because new network forces more transfers and actual ridership did not really increase much. One way to judge success of any major program is how it is fulfilling mission and goals of the organization; METRO does not appear to have an active Mission Statement, new METRO board should focus first on developing Mission Statement and Vision that reflects its intended purpose. This will help gauge success of all programs and initiatives objectively. METRO should also reconstitute a Citizen Advisory Board consisting of people who actually use transit daily and community leaders.

METRO should celebrate what it accomplished over the last 35 years, i.e. one of the largest barrier separated HOV lane systems in the nation, Park & Rides, Transit Centers and a BUS & LRT network (Redline is one of the most successful LRT lines in the nation in terms of ridership). METRO should develop a plan to maximize the efficiency of the existing assets and focus on customer service. METRO also should partner with other agencies such as TXDOT to improve their HOV/HOT lane system as part of TXDOT Freeway Improvement Projects. US 290 improvement project is such an opportunity. The current plan for US 290 project calls for no improvements to the current HOV system. City should support METRO in pushing for a two-way HOV/HOT Lane system along US 290. TXDOT estimates this will require additional \$100 M to \$150 M in funding, however this could be paid over time with toll collections from two-way HOT lanes. We need more time to study this further to develop a detailed strategy for US 290. This project is time sensitive and quick action is required by METRO and City of Houston.

METRO utilized most of the bonding capacity authorized under 2003 referendum. METRO should update their 20-year transit plan and go back to voters for more bonding capacity in the near future. METRO's 20-year plan should include all modes and all technologies. METRO should consider BRT and BRT Lite as it may provide better benefit cost ratio for certain corridors.

Historically, METRO has been planning, designing and implementing high capacity projects with its own funds and resources. Due to budget constraints, METRO should seek local partners in providing local match for major projects. METRO should develop a process for the development of these joint projects to help local partners understand METRO's operational needs. METRO should involve City of Houston as partner in all of their projects from the onset

to achieve efficiency in transportation and infrastructure delivery. City should support by petitioning the local congressional delegation for more transit dollars to Houston.

Several concerns are raised regarding METRO's procurement process and project delivery. Firms proposing or bidding their services are concerned about constantly changing procurement processes with no predictability, time spent in signing a contract with no guarantee of work.

RESOURCES

- **COH Planning & Development Briefing**
Presenter: Patrick Walsh, Director
Date: Friday, January 22, 2016
Documentation:
Plan Houston
Houston Bike Plan January 22, 2016
- **Public Works & Engineering Briefing**
Presenter: Dale Rudick, Director
Date: Monday, January 25, 2016
- **METRO Briefing**
Presenter: Tom Lambert,
Date: Thursday, January 28, 2016
- **Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC)**
Presenter: Alan C. Clark, Transportation Director
Date: Friday, January 29, 2019
Documents:
Mobility Report 2014
2014 Air Quality Initiatives Report for 8-County Houston-Galveston Region
Greater West Houston Mobility Plan – Executive Summary October 201
My Southwest Freeway – Executive Summary
Sustainable Transportation Strategies
- **Houston Airport System Briefing**
Presenter: Mario C. Diaz, Director of Aviation
Date: Friday, January 29, 2016
Documents:
Houston Airport System – Annual Report 2014
- **City of Houston Economic Development Briefing**
Presenter: Andy Icken, Chief Development Office
Date: February 1, 2016
- **TxDOT Briefing**
Presenters: Quincy D. Allen, P.E. District Engineer
Raquelle Lewis, Public Information Officer
Date: February 5, 2016
Documents:
Texas Freight Mobility Plan – 2015 Summary

- **Gulf Coast Rail District (GCRD) Briefing**
Presenter: Maureen Crocker, Executive Director
Date: February 12, 2016
- **Port of Houston Authority Briefing**
Presenter: Roger Guenther, Executive Director
Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2016