



## Public Participation Plan

### Introduction

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is conducting a study regarding transportation improvements to the southern section of State Highway 6 from FM 521 to IH 45 South. The SH 6 South Access Management Study area encompasses the communities of Arcola, Alvin, Manvel, Santa Fe, Hitchcock and Bayou Vista, and Fort Bend, Brazoria and Galveston counties. The study is seeking solutions to reduce crashes, improve traffic flow and minimize motorist delay.

An important aspect of the project is actively engaging the public. To assure a transportation planning process that supports early and continued participation, H-GAC has developed a project-specific public participation plan that is in accordance with H-GAC's overall public involvement commitment to provide complete information, timely public notice and full public access to key decisions, the Transportation Public Participation Process adopted by the Transportation Policy Council July 27, 2007.

The Southern SH 6 Segment Access Management Study public participation activities provide an ongoing information exchange from the beginning to the end of the study. Arriving at consensus on the short- and long-range alternatives during the study process will enable the next phase of programming improvements and design to focus on implementation details rather than big-picture issues. This section describes the various public participation activities and techniques that were used during the development of the study.

### Public Participation Initiatives

H-GAC will actively engage the public in the decision-making process, in keeping with the Federal Highway Administration's five key initiatives for a successful public participation process:

1. **Public involvement is more than simply following legislation and regulations.** In a democratic society, people have opportunities to debate issues, frame alternative solutions and affect final decisions. Knowledge is the basis of such participation. The public needs to know details about a plan or action in order to evaluate the relative importance and anticipated costs and benefits. Through continued interaction with the entire community, agencies and project sponsors can build support and, more importantly, assure that the public has the opportunity to help shape the substance of plans and actions. In summary, public agencies must act as public servants.
2. **Agency and non-agency partners need to be in continuous contact during transportation decision-making,** from early problem identification to definition of purpose and need to alternatives development to implementation of a particular solution.
3. **Agencies and project sponsors should use a variety of public involvement techniques** to target different groups or individuals in different ways or to target the same groups or individuals in different ways. A single, one-size-fits-all approach usually leaves people out of the process.



4. **Agencies and project sponsors should search out the public and work hard to elicit comments.** It is true that resources are limited, and agencies cannot make anyone participate. However, transportation agencies have repeatedly found that actively engaging the public and changing unsuccessful approaches bring greater results.
5. **Agencies and project sponsors should focus on increasing public participation in decisions** rather than on conducting participation activities because they are required. Decision-making should include both the continuous stream of informal decisions made by agency staff and lower-level management and the less frequent formal decisions made by higher-level management. Timely agency response to ideas from the public and the integration of those ideas into decisions shows the public that participation is worthwhile. A focus on the wide range of possible decision points gets agencies past simply offering the public passive opportunities to comment on proposals just before formal decision-making.

H-GAC has outlined a public participation process that will achieve these initiatives and provide the team with invaluable guidance for future improvements within the SH 6 South corridor.

## **Public Participation Objectives**

The public participation process is driven by 13 primary objectives:

- Initiation of citizen participation at the onset of the study and continued throughout the process.
- Intensify efforts to solicit community views prior to major project-decision points.
- Public access to all relevant information.
- Regular reports of study findings to the public.
- Provision of orientation materials to accommodate new participants entering the process.
- Two-way communication between the study team and community participants to freely exchange information, ideas and values.
- Presentation of transportation options in an objective manner.
- Use of a variety of techniques and approaches to reach a diverse group of persons potentially affected by the proposed project.
- Serious consideration of all suggestions from the community.
- Timely response with answers and information to citizen inquiries.
- Complete documentation of public participation activities.



- Incorporation of small discussion groups to encourage a casual environment for discussions during public meetings.
- Evaluation of the public participation program's effectiveness.

## **Targeted Groups**

Three primary groups are targeted as part of this plan. Each group provides unique perspectives in relation to the project, ranging from the highly technical to the extremely concerned.

### *Steering Committee*

A group of local technical and policy decision makers has been tapped for the SH 6 South Access Management Study Steering Committee. The committee meets at key milestones in the process to receive and assess reports on progress, comment on the schedule, coordinate with their respective agencies and provide oversight of major activities associated with the study. This group provides details on current and future plans, policies and standards to be used in the process. The committee extends technical guidance related to project goals, determining measures of effectiveness and project tools to be employed in the corridor. It is composed of representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), H-GAC and local counties and cities.

### *Stakeholders*

The SH 6 South corridor has many stakeholders that are affected by transportation issues in the corridor, including:

- Residents
- Civic and homeowner organizations
- Businesses and chambers of commerce
- Commuters
- Schools, colleges and churches
- Police and emergency service providers
- Landowners, developers and real estate agents
- Environmental and historic preservation groups

The team will hold several meetings to educate the stakeholders on access management and the study process in general. The main function of these meetings is to serve as a method to consider individual issues and possibly incorporate those issues into the study recommendations. These stakeholder meetings will focus on the citizenry affected daily by the corridor — the people that live and work in the corridor and have an intimate knowledge of the issues affecting the region.



## General Public

The intent of this public participation plan is to promote honest, active, two-way communications with the public — actively listening to their concerns and then keeping them informed about the study’s progress — so that all community factions feel as if their concerns have been addressed and they have the opportunity to participate.

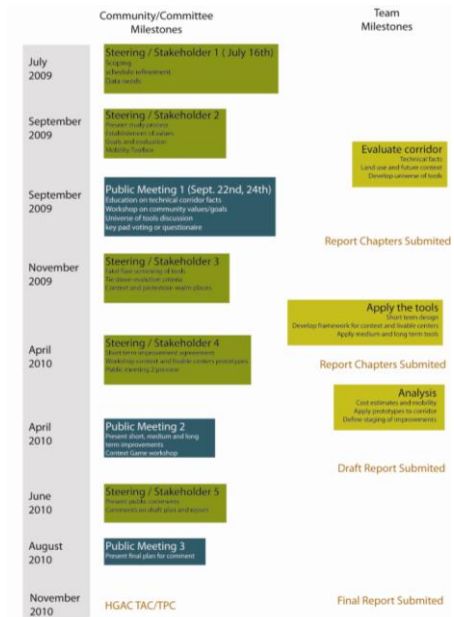
Public meetings are a major component of this two-way communications effort and are scheduled to be held at three different times during key stages of the project. For each round of meetings, there will be two identical meetings held at different locations on separate nights, giving the public maximum opportunity to participate.

The first round of meetings will relay the purpose, process and progress of the study and engage the public in providing specific input on corridor activities and characteristics. The second round of meetings will present suggested short-, medium- and long-term recommendations involve the public in a hands-on workshop to refine the suggestions. In the final round of meetings the team will present the final proposed plan.

## Schedule of Activities

Public involvement activities are scheduled to obtain critical input at key stages of the study to keep the project moving forward.

Three series of public meetings and multiple Steering Committee and stakeholder meetings will be held throughout the course of the study. As other opportunities arise to present current study findings, such as standing meetings of local business and community organizations, the team will schedule additional public outreach activities.



## Outreach Approach

H-GAC will employ a variety of methods, from high-tech tools to high-touch meetings, to reach people of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in providing education and awareness of the project as well as to maximize public input to direct future implementation.

## Dynamic Communications Tools

### Presentation materials

At Steering Committee, stakeholder and public meetings, presentation materials with clear, strong graphics will be used to assist the public in understanding technical concepts. These include presentation boards, PowerPoint presentations, handouts and other communications tools. The materials explain topics such as the study process and goals, project schedule, overview of the

corridor and funding partners, as well as convey the technical results at each stage of the study. Team members knowledgeable of the project will be available so that attendees who have questions may have them addressed and provide direct input regarding the project.

## Project maps

Another important technique in engaging the public is using detailed aerial maps to gather specific comments on the public's knowledge of the corridor (locations of developments, high crash locations, problem intersections, etc.) and suggested improvements. These maps will be documented as part of the public participation process and will become a formal portion of the project record.



Web site: [www.SH6Mobility.com](http://www.SH6Mobility.com)

As part of the effort to educate and inform the public about the study, the project team will keep an up-to-date and informative project Web site. Presentation materials, summary reports, public meeting notices and other information will be updated periodically to keep the public attuned to study progress. Interested persons should bookmark the page and check it regularly to review new information and links to other pertinent Web sites.

## *Comprehensive Meeting Notification*


As part of their goal to make diligent efforts to involve the public, the federal government has set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) public involvement requirements (40CFR1506.6). This study's outreach approach complies with the NEPA directives for publication and notification of public meetings. It also complies with TxDOT Houston's guidelines for the sequence and types of notices. The specific outreach components include:

- **Elected officials notification letter** from Alan Clark, H-GAC's Director of Transportation as the first publicity item, in keeping with TxDOT Houston's preference for notifying elected officials about public meeting opportunities prior to any other advertisements or mailings.
- **Legal ad** in *The Houston Chronicle*, the area's largest distribution daily newspaper, 30 days prior to the public meetings in accordance with TxDOT Houston's preferred timeline.
- **Web site posting** on [www.sh6mobility.com](http://www.sh6mobility.com) and H-GAC's Transportation Public Information page.

# SH 6 South Access Management Study



- **Postcard** in English and Spanish text mailed to approximately 6,000 adjacent property owners and stakeholder groups two weeks prior to the meetings. Property owners within ¼ mile of the study corridor were collected from Brazoria and Galveston County appraisal districts.
- **E-notice** sent to Steering Committee members for them to distribute to their own e-mail distribution lists.
- **Display ads** in three community publications, *Alvin Sun*, *Brazosport Facts* and *Galveston County News*, placed two weeks prior to the meetings.
- **Limited English Proficiency** outreach recognizing that there are a good number of Spanish-speaking households in the corridor, with a Spanish display ad placed in *LaVoz*, the weekly Spanish newspaper distributed by *The Houston Chronicle*, in addition to the Spanish text on postcards mailed to more than 6,000 households and businesses.
- **Posters** for Steering Committee members to post in area businesses and institutions.
- **Media release** to area publications and radio and television stations.
- **Dynamic messaging signs** posted by TranStar on northbound and southbound lanes of SH 288 and IH 45 South the days of the meetings.



## SH 6 South Public Meetings regarding safety and mobility improvements

The Houston-Galveston Area Council invites you to participate in a discussion regarding transportation improvements to the southern section of State Highway 6 from FM 521 to IH 45 South. The study area encompasses the communities of Arcola, Alvin, Manvel, Santa Fe, Hitchcock and Bayou Vista, and Fort Bend, Brazoria and Galveston Counties.

The Access Management Study is seeking solutions to reduce crashes, improve traffic flow and minimize motorist delay.

Please join us to discuss possible improvements and learn more about the study

**Tuesday, September 22, 2009**  
Santa Fe High School Cafeteria  
16000 SH 6  
Santa Fe, TX 77510  
6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Presentation at 7 p.m.

**Thursday, September 24, 2009**  
Church of the Harvest  
7505 Wilson Drive  
Manvel, TX 77578  
6:30-8:30 p.m.  
Presentation at 7 p.m.

For more information visit [www.sh6mobility.com](http://www.sh6mobility.com)

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, H-GAC will provide for reasonable accommodations for persons attending H-GAC functions. Requests from persons needing special accommodations should be received by H-GAC staff 24 hours prior to a function. The public meeting will be conducted in English, and requests for language interpreters or other special communication needs should be made at least two working days prior to a function. Please call 713-993-4557 for assistance.



All materials will contain a consistent graphic theme so the public can readily identify the materials relate to the SH 6 South Access Management Study as opposed to other past or concurrent studies covering other parts of the region.

To assure that the individuals who have expressed interested in the project receive ongoing updates of public involvement activities, the mailing list will be updated from the sign-in sheets of each round of public meetings.