



**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN
HARRIS COUNTY TRANSIT
HOUSTON, TEXAS**



**Harris County
Community Services Department
Office of Transit Services
8410 Lantern Point Drive
Houston, Texas 77054**

March 2019

**Harris County Community Services Department
Office of Transit Services
(Formerly the Harris County Community &
Economic Development Department)**

Public Participation Plan and Procedures

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to establish procedures that allow for, encourage, and monitor participation of all residents in the Harris County Community Services Department Office of Transit Services (“HCCSD-OTS”) service area. HCCSD was formerly called the Harris County Community and Economic Development Department and is the recipient listed with the Federal Transit Administration. HCCSD-OTS is responsible for preparing and utilizing a Public Participation Plan (PPP) that is developed in consultation with interested parties pursuant to the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (“FAST Act”).

HCCSD-OTS coordinates with and is a member of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (“H-GAC” the regional MPO). In the capacity as a member of H-GAC, a representative of HCCSD-OTS sets on various transportation related committees including the Transportation Policy Council and the Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee. The H-GAC-MPO is the agency charged with Transportation Planning for Houston region and the development of plans such as the Regional Transit Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program.

A locally developed comprehensive service plan is currently in place that addresses the current transportation service infrastructure and the future transportation needs of our region. The participation procedures outlined below are intended to afford an expanded list of interested parties with an opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs.

Goals and Objectives for the Public Participation/Involvement Plan:

1. Goal:

The goal of the Public Participation Plan is to offer opportunities for the engagement of all residents of HCCSD-OTS service area to participate in the development of HCCSD-OTS transportation programs.

2. Objectives:

a. To provide information in non-english languages consistent with the

- HCCSD-OTS Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) policy;
- b. To provide a general notification of meetings particularly forums for public input, in a manner that is understandable to all populations in the area;
 - c. To hold meetings in locations which are accessible and reasonably welcoming to all area residents;
 - d. To provide a framework of actions appropriate to various types of plans and programs, as well as amendments or alterations to any such plan or program;
 - e. To use various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information including but not limited to charts, graphs, maps and the internet.

Identification of Stakeholders

Consultation with Stakeholders is critical in formulating a Program of Projects. Stakeholders are those who are either directly, or indirectly, affected by a plan, or the recommendations of that plan. Stakeholders are broken down into several groups: general residents, public agencies, private organizations, other transit providers, non-profits, and businesses.

Public agencies can provide valuable input to the planning process, in addition to assisting in gaining participation from traditionally under-represented populations. Pertinent public agencies include those that have clients who fall into under-represented populations, including but not limited to minorities, low-income, and limited English proficiency households. These agencies have great insight into the transportation needs of their clients and are useful partners in overcoming difficult barriers that may not be understood by professionals dealing with the provision of transportation services.

Private organizations and businesses offer a number of perspectives that are valuable to the planning process. Often, transportation for employees is of critical concern to private sector employers.

The largest Regional Stakeholder group is the Regional Transit Coordination Subcommittee (“RTCS”) of the H-GAC. The RTCS is made up of regional stakeholders with a vested interest in public transportation services including but not limited to representatives from organizations representing health and human services, private and public transit providers, education, city and county planning, senior services, workforce, and state government. In addition to the RTCS, HCCSD-OTS has a close working relationship with United Way of Greater Houston, United Way of Baytown/Bayarea, the Bay Area Transportation Partnership, the Greater Houston Partnership, and the Baytown Area Resource Association (“BARA”).

Strategies HCCSD-OTS may utilize to engage the following Populations and increase Outreach efforts:

- Public Notices in local newspaper and making special notations or notices in appropriate non-English languages;

- Public surveys both on-board and nonuser surveys;
- Use of local news media;
- Focus groups for the purpose of gaining input from a particular defined portion of the Community;
- Advocacy groups to disseminate or gather information for minority and low-English proficiency populations;
- Presentations to professional, citizen, and student organizations;
- Articles in community newsletters;
- Press releases and meeting with local media representatives;
- Presentations by experts on various transit-related subjects; and
- The use of various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information including but not limited to charts, graphs, photos, maps and the internet.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POLICY STATEMENT AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq., provides that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance. Title VI and its implementing regulations require that FTA recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP).

To that end, HCCSD-OTS provides translation and interpretation services free of charge upon request by calling (713)-578-2216. HCCSD-OTS contracts with Language Line Services, a language translation firm, to provide phone interpretation. The firm provides real-time phone interpretation in 140 different languages and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

As of the most recent 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 1,826,552 (43.7%) out of the 4,175,737 residents of Harris County listed a language other than English as the language spoken at home. Of the above 1,826,552 residents, 1,445,260 (79.1%) listed Spanish as the language spoken at home which is the largest non-English speaking segment of the County. As such, all publications, communications and advertising are published in English and Spanish.

Availability of Funding

The service area of HCCSD-OTS lies within the Houston Urbanized Area (“UZA”). The primary recipient of FTA funding for the Houston UZA is the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County or commonly referred to as METRO. The allocation of funding amongst the various providers within the Houston UZA is responsibility of METRO. Simply put, the process involves a draft program of projects (“POP”) submitted by the providers within the UZA followed by a consultation process with the providers. Ultimately a final Program of Projects is developed based upon the available funds to the Houston UZA.

Public Notification of the Program of Projects

Following the development of the POP, METRO and/or HCCSD-OTS will publish an

announcement of the POP containing the project descriptions and funding amounts in a newspaper(s) of general circulation in the service area of the HCCSD-OTS. In addition the POP notification will indicate where residents can examine the proposed program and budget in detail and submit comments on the proposed program and the performance of HCCSD-OTS. Additionally, the POP will be published in non-English languages consistent with the HCCSD-OTS Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) policy. The HCCSD-OTS Title VI and LEP policies are posted on our website at www.harriscountytransit.com.

The announcement will also state that, if requested, a public hearing will be held. The announcement will also state that the proposed program will be the final program unless amended. HCCSD-OTS will consider any comments and views received including those of private transportation providers in preparing the final POP.

This plan will serve as the Public Participation Plan for the Harris County Community Services Department – Office of Transit Services Transportation Programs. Availability of the policy for review will be advertised on the HCCSD-OTS website at www.harriscountytransit.com. People can obtain information about the process or submit input to Mr. Ken Fickes, Transit Services Director, 8410 Lantern Point Dr., Houston, Texas 77054.

Title VI

Harris County Community Services Department, Office of Transit Services is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in the conduct of its business, including its Title VI responsibilities - the delivery of equitable and accessible transportation services. Harris County CSD recognizes its responsibilities to the communities in which it operates and to the society it serves. It is the County's policy to utilize its best efforts to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under its program of transit service delivery and related benefits.

The responsibility for carrying out Harris County's commitment to this program has been delegated to the Harris County Office of Transit Services. Harris County CSD has a Title VI Compliance Officer who will receive and investigate Title VI complaints which come through the complaint procedure. However, all managers, supervisors and employees share in the responsibility for making Harris County's Title VI Program a success.

Additional information concerning Harris County's Title VI obligations and the complaint procedure can be found on the Harris County web site www.harriscountytransit.com or by calling 713-578-2000.

Regional Stakeholders

Anthony Cochran, TxDOT-Beaumont
Chamane Barrow, Brazoria County CIL
Christopher LaRue, The Woodlands Township
Claudia Wicks, Colorado Valley Transit
Darla Walton, TxDOT-Bryan
Ellen Seaton, Harris County Community Services Office of Social Services
James Hollis, Gulf Coast Center/Connect Transit
Mary Fay, METRO
Ken Fickes, Harris County Transit
Maria Palacios, Houston Center for Independent Living
Mark Linenschmidt, City of League City
Michael Worthy, City of Galveston
Erin Tritten, United Way
Shawn Johnson, City of Conroe
Stephen Ndimma, TxDOT-Yoakum
Tenille Jones, Fort Bend County
Travis Madison, TxDOT-Houston
Valerie Marvin, City of Missouri City
Wendy Weedon, Brazos Transit District
Meggin Lorino, Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
Allison Huelett, The Friendship Center
Steve Atchison, American Red Cross
Jon Branson, City of Pearland

Consulting Health & Human Services Agencies

Care for Elders, Josh Reynolds
United Way of Greater Houston, Rebecca Jasso
Houston Center for Independent Living
Harris County MHMRA, Morgan Peterson
Amazing Place, Lillian Leeds
Harris County Community Services, Office of Social Services
Harris County Veterans Services Officer

General Public

Bay Area Transportation Partnership
Greater Houston Partnership
Baytown East Chambers County Economic Development Foundation
Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
Economic Alliance Houston Port Region
Katy Area Economic Development Council
Lone Star College

Summary of Outreach Efforts (2013-2015)

- CSD Office of Transit Services is an active member of the Supplier Diversity Advisory Committee of the Houston Minority Supplier Development Council
- Transit representative facilitates application process for Spanish speaking small businesses in support of the Houston Minority Supplier Development Council
- Harris County RIDES conducted a customer satisfaction survey to solicit comments and input on service in December 20125 (mailed to over 3,8500 clients) Comments addressed in quarterly newsletter
- Onboard survey conducted on fixed route buses in 2015.
- Humble ISD Transition Fair
- Greenspoint Adult Probation
- RIDES Meet and Greet
- University of Houston – College of Optometry Fair
- Bay Area Partnership
- Asian Morning Tea
- Perkins School for the Blind
- Clear Creek ISD Transition Fair
- Episcopal Health Charities
- United Way 211 Call Center
- Houston Center for Independent Living
- Visually Impaired Group
- Pasadena ISD Transition Fair
- United Way Meeting : Focusing on Transportation “What’s New”
- San Jacinto Dialysis Center
- Crown Dialysis Center
- Keene-Lavin Bagget Community Center
- Galena Park Manor Community Center
- BARA Advisory Meetings
- Employment and Social Security Workshop
- Baytown Health Fair
- Aldine Family Hope Center
- Metro Transportation In-Service
- Woodlands Christian Tower Health Fair
- Easter Seals Houston Zoo Walk
- Houston Seniors Citizens Fun in the Park Picnic
- ESPN Mental Health & Aging
- Sierra Meadows Senior Living Facility
- Vietnamese-American Family Center
- Cornerstone Garden Senior Living Facility
- NorthVale Independent Living
- Madison Jobe Center Senior EXPO
- Pasadena Convention Center
- One Voice Texas
- METRO Travel Planning
- HCIL Visually Impaired

- Grandparent Caregiver Service EXPO
- Disability Awareness Day 2014 & ADA Open Doors
- The Journey Adult Senior Care & Caregiver Conference
- Central Senior Senate Outreach
- AARP Travel Coaching
- Texas Veterans Advisory Committee for the Veterans
- Rides Meet and Greet at United Way
- The Latino Center Senior Resource Fair
- Houston Housing Benefits Check-up
- The Bridge Conference on Aging and Disability
- University of Houston Parent Education Project
- The Mayor's Back to School Fest
- Kiwanis International Luncheon Meeting
- Keeping Our Communities Healthy Conference