

H-GAC Looking at Transportation Plan as Local Population Grows

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The Houston-Galveston Area Council Transportation Department is working on a long-range plan to accommodate transportation issues stemming from an expected growth of 61 percent more people in the Houston-Galveston area.

The plan was on display for feedback at the Baytown Community Center Tuesday.

Meagan Coughlin, H-GAC spokeswoman, said the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan covers thoroughfares, roadways, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and freight transportation.

“This is our long-range plan, and we update it every four years,” Coughlin said. “Our transportation plan has vision and goals and that sets the foundation as we start preparing for the future. It all starts with the RTP.”

Coughlin said they want to have a two-way dialogue with people about the plan, take their feedback and come back next spring with a plan that she says will eventually be adopted.

H-GAC says in addition to the 61 percent increase in population, it expects 50 percent more jobs, going from 3.2 million being employed in 2017 to 4.8 million in 2045.

The group is also anticipating a 61 percent increase in vehicles on the road, up to 8.8 million in 2045 from 5.5 million in 2017.

The plan aims to reduce traffic congestion as well as vehicle crashes. It will also concentrate on asset management and operations, support regional economic development opportunities and emphasizes protection of the environment.

“We are getting public input on it, and asking them what would they like to see in regards with these modes of transportation,” said Stephan Gage, H-GAC chief transportation planner. “Do we have enough? Or not enough? And if it is not enough, where do you want to see it?”

In Baytown, City Manager Rick Davis said they are working closely with H-GAC to accommodate the expected growth and have already made some strides, including the widening of Garth Road.

Davis said one of the more important things related to the plan is the Highway 146 study that includes input from Baytown, Chambers County, Mont Belvieu, Liberty County and the Texas Department of Transportation.

“The study typified hazards, anticipated future growth and impact on that corridor as well as the increasing truck traffic,” Davis said. “It was all in an effort to determine what projects we should do in that area in the future to accommodate that growth.”

Davis added that other projects the city is working with H-GAC include the on- and off-ramp reversals that will direct more traffic onto San Jacinto Boulevard, which is currently under construction, and the widening of Garth Road, as well as the complete reconstruction of the intersection at Baker and Garth.

For more information on the 2045RTP, visit <http://2045RTP.com>.