

RTP 2045 Intercity Bus Initiatives
within the Houston-Galveston Region

Federal planning guidelines now require the inclusion of “consideration of the role that intercity buses may play in reducing congestion, pollution and energy consumption in a cost-effective manner and strategies and investments that preserve and enhance intercity bus systems including those that are privately owned and operated”.¹

The Houston-Galveston region has been the location of an innovative intercity bus project between the Brazos Transit District and a private organization for several years. The Charles Wilson VA Shuttle bus provided 12,389 passenger trips in 2017 for disabled veterans travelling from Lufkin, Texas to medical appointments at the VA hospital in the Texas Medical Center in Houston. The veterans are transported daily along the 248 mile route (round trip) at no-cost to them. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Charles Wilson VA Shuttle



There are several other emerging opportunities in the Houston-Galveston region, based on prior planning studies, to establish similar mobility options for veterans and many others along other major freeway corridors into Houston. Those opportunities would involve developing new working and planning relationships with representatives of over-the-road private carriers such as Greyhound and Trailways to incorporate intermediate stops along their established routes.

Several areas have been identified as potential locations for intermodal terminals in the region which would facilitate those intermediate stops. One potential location is along the Interstate 10 East Corridor, near State Highway 146, between Houston and Beaumont. That location was

¹ [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(H)]

identified in the Liberty and Chambers counties Transit Plans as a nexus between north-south and east-west travel patterns that could benefit from a multi-modal transfer facility.²

Passengers through that proposed facility could be provided with options to transfer to-and-from local and express buses in addition to access to carpools, vanpools, taxis and other multimodal options.

Another potential location for an intermodal terminal was identified in the Interstate 45 North Freeway corridor in Huntsville. That location was recommended in the Walker County Transit Plan which envisioned moving the current Greyhound bus terminal from a small facility located near the center of historic downtown Huntsville, to a larger multimodal facility closer to the I-45 freeway corridor.³

A longer-range planning study, the Regional Transit Framework Study, identified multiple roadway corridors within the Houston-Galveston region that could evolve to include various express bus services between the counties and smaller cities in the region as shown in Figure 2.⁴

The termini of those express bus corridors, identified on the map as enhanced transfer points, could be planned to include smaller facilities to accommodate more intra-regional travel options. Eventually, those express bus or cross-county routes could be designed to provide feeder bus services to larger multimodal terminals along the interstate highway system.

In addition to the proposed multimodal facilities and feeder bus routes another option for future planning considerations would develop a regionally coordinated fare system. In that coordinated fare system potential customers for the intercity bus services could pre-purchase their fares for each segment of their trip, from origin to destination. That concept of a coordinated or seamless fare system could include travel options for more than one service provider or more than one mode of transportation.

² Liberty County Transit Plan, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), 2009; Chambers County Transit Plan, H-GAC, 2009.

³ Walker County Transit Plan, H-GAC, 2012.

⁴ H-GAC Regional Transit Framework Study—2017 Interim Report

Figure 2. 2040 Incremental Expansion Composite Scenario

