

PUBLIC COMMENT GIVES TRANSIT PLANNERS DIRECTION

The federally approved Alternatives Analysis (AA) of the Galveston-Houston Mobility Corridor is analyzing three primary alternatives as potential transit mobility solutions for the corridor. This analysis is sponsored by the City of Galveston, Galveston County, and the Federal Transit Administration.



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) would include a two-way commuter bus service operating on exclusive bus lanes and high-capacity buses between Galveston and Downtown Houston and the 11 cities in between.



Express Bus, also known as "TSM," would involve optimizing and expanding park & ride bus services along IH 45 and SH 3 to employment centers between and in Galveston and Houston.



Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) would provide high-speed transit service along the GH&H rail line that runs parallel with IH 45 and SH 3 almost the entire corridor. CRT would include exclusive use of this rail line for three hours in the AM peak and three hours in the PM peak providing two-way commuter service between Downtown Houston and Galveston and the 11 cities in between.



Comments From The Public...

■ Improve Mobility

- efficient moving of people from Point A to Point B
- increased transportation options
- making it possible to get around without a car
- impact on east-west mobility
- mobility of non-drivers

■ Advance Economic Development

- access to employment
- tourism
- alternative benefit to economy
- potential for transit-oriented development

■ Reduce Congestion

- reduction of traffic
- lost man-hours during commute times
- alternatives to auto traffic

■ Expand Operation Hours

- desire to use transit to access jobs outside identified peak commute hours
- access to shopping and entertainment

The first round of receiving public input on corridor needs, study goals, and evaluation criteria to assess each alternative has been completed. Three evening open houses were held along the corridor the week of September 20th in Galveston, League City, and Houston in the East End. With over 200 citizens participating, the project team received extensive comments.

Phase One public comments were compiled from open house comment cards, flip charts, the project website, and individual emails received prior to October 12th. Public comments on the needs and goals included a wide range of issues. Based on input, as detailed above, the greatest needs and goals are clearly to improve mobility, advance economic development, reduce congestion, and expand operation hours. Additional comments covered issues such as environmental impacts, transfers needed, access to destinations, evacuation, and maximum cost benefit.

Importance of Criteria in Comparison of Alternatives

Individuals were asked to evaluate each criterion as Very Important, Important, or Not Important. In the summary analysis each response was weighted with a numerical value of 3, 2, or 1, respectively. The following table presents the ranking for each criterion in order from highest to lowest.

Summary of Public Rankings	
Criteria for Alternative Comparison	Total
Reduce traffic congestion	233
Convenience	182
Travel time savings	168
Emergency evacuation	165
Environmental impacts	161
Impact on businesses and neighborhoods	156
Cost to build	151
New land use development	139
Traffic disruption during construction	124

Alternative Preference

Comments included counting intentional and clear statements of support or opposition to each alternative. The results were as follows:

Summary of Comments		
Technology	Support	Opposition
Commuter Rail	99	3
Bus Rapid Transit	4	12
Express Bus	6	11

The public also offered suggestions of other alternatives to reduce congestion on IH 45, including elevated rail, high speed rail, toll roads, ferry transportation, rail built in the center of IH 45, elevated or expanded roadway, exclusive tracks, triple tracks, connecting with statewide rail transit, SH 6 Commuter Rail, and developing land use policies that increase the ability to work closer to home.

What is going on now...

The project team is developing detailed descriptions of the alternatives and sub-alternatives. These descriptions will include capital costs, cost/benefit, preliminary right-of-way requirements, potential environmental impact issues (such as air quality benefits), operation costs, public and interagency consensus, land use/development impacts, evacuation capacity, economic development, employment benefits, and an examination of the demographics along the alternatives. This detailed information will be used for evaluating and ranking each alternative and sub-alternative across the criteria. To estimate and evaluate ridership on BRT and Commuter Rail operation plans are being run through approved regional travel demand models. This work will be the focus of the next round of public meetings and meetings of the Advisory and Stakeholder committees in January 2010. The goal of the second round of meetings is to arrive at a consensus on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) to address growing congestion along IH 45 between Galveston and Houston.

Project Website

The project website www.GalvestonRailStudy.com, online since September, is a clearinghouse of Alternatives Analysis documents associated with this project, including:

- Project Initiation Package
- Project Management Plan
- Public Involvement Plan
- Open House Display Boards and Maps
- Project Newsletters

Website visitors will find information about the Alternatives Analysis, including descriptions of the alternatives, Galveston-Houston Corridor needs, and project goals. A survey form and comment form are also provided to give website visitors an opportunity to offer their comments about this project.

"No-Build"



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)



Express Bus (TSM)



Commuter Rail (CRT)



Visit our website at www.galvestonrailstudy.com