

Meeting Minutes
Sustainable Communities Planning Grant
Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Consortium
Tuesday, February 26, 2013, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm
H-GAC Conference Room A, Second Floor

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE:

Blueprint Houston, Joe Webb and Martha Murphree
Center for Houston's Future, Donna Rybiski
City of Houston, Mike Kramer and Amar Mohite
City of Huntsville, Sherry McKibben
Fort Bend County, Ron Drachenberg
Gulf Coast Economic Development District, Chuck Wemple
Houston Advanced Research Center, David Hitchcock
Harris County, Christy Lambright
Houston-Galveston Area Council, Jeff Taebel and Cheryl Mergo
Houston Tomorrow, David Crossley
Houston Wilderness, Mark Reid
Local Initiatives Support Coalition, Amanda Timm
METRO, Shaida Libhart
Montgomery County, Joanne Ducharme
Port of Houston Authority, Dennis Basinger
TSU Center for Transportation, Carol Lewis
United Way of Greater Houston, Curtis McMinn
UTMB, John Prochaska

Also in attendance (based upon sign-in sheet available at the meeting and meeting participation)

Peggy Adolph, Texas Southern University, Toni Candis and Jarred Briggs, Harris County; Anna Sedillo, City of Houston, Meredith Dang, Kelly Porter, Amanda Thorin, and Chelsea Young, H-GAC.

1. Regular Business – Call to Order

Chuck Wemple, Coordinating Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

2. Certify Quorum

More than 51% of the member entities were present. There was a quorum of members at the meeting.

3. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

4. Approval of December 19, 2012, Meeting Minutes

Action: Motion made by Mike Kramer, seconded by Dennis Basinger, to approve the meeting minutes.

5. Videos (Discussion)

Amanda Thorin displayed a series of short videos that will be used as part of the Regional Plan public outreach process. The videos highlighted sustainable initiatives already taking place in the region. The videos consisted of:

1. Our Region Gives – A resident opens a thrift shop in order to fund her food pantry for the needy.

2. Our Region Moves – Highlights efforts to make our region’s transportation system more green, walkable and bikeable.
3. Our Region Nourishes – Highlights efforts in promoting and growing local food
4. Our Region Recycles – Displays efforts in our region to recycle materials for re-use, reduce waste, and re-use materials for housing
5. Our Region Saves – Highlights efforts to conserve energy
6. Our Region Volunteers – Highlights efforts from around the region in which residents are volunteering in order to promote environmental sustainability and education

The videos will be released one at a time over six weeks, however Coordinating Committee partners can use the videos at anytime they need. There will be a longer video that will be released that will encompass the subject matter of the current videos and include additional subject matter that may have been lacking in the current six vignettes. The marketing consultant, Edelman, will produce a public relations plan and press releases to send to the media. The videos provide another form of education and capacity building, the videos also help better define sustainability for our region. H-GAC is open to suggestions from committee members on how to best engage the public upon release of the videos.

6. Focus Groups (Discussion)

Meredith Dang reported on the planned series of focus groups that will help refine the draft regional and local strategies, identify activities and best practices already occurring in the region, set the stage for endorsement of the plan, and build champions of the plan. The primary component of the focus group series will be geographic-based meetings throughout the region in order to meet with local government staff and other decision-makers. These meetings will consist in-depth discussions about the draft strategies. H-GAC will also be meeting with several other groups such as:

- H-GAC Board-Appointed Committees
- Topical groups (food policy, etc.)
- Fair Housing Equity Assessment Workgroup

The focus groups will consist of a 15-20 minute presentation about the status of the plan, and the survey results, and a brief discussion. A gap analysis will be conducted in order to determine if certain groups still need to be engaged. Each presentation will be tailored to each group. H-GAC is open to suggestions from Coordinating Committee members on groups they think should be engaged as part of the process.

In addition, County Profiles have been created to highlight existing conditions, demographic and other data specific to each county. The profiles will be handed out at each geographic focus group meetings. The focus group meeting series will be completed by the end of May.

Chuck Wemple stated that an in-depth gap analysis was completed on the previous version of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Based on the analysis of several of the past plans, most of the goals for the new plan have been influenced by RPSD goals.

7. Building Support (Activity)

Staff led a facilitated exercise to determine how the plan can help advance the mission of organizations that make-up the Coordinating Committee, as well identify possible challenges for implementing the plan, and getting buy-in. Below are the ideas provided from the participants:

Group 1:

- Help determine how existing systems function
- Make changes in service to increase mobility within certain neighborhoods
- Discover missed/underserved populations
- Encourage cooperative and cohesive planning amongst localities
- Open up communications between organizations/localities
- Increase awareness of activities going on throughout the region
- Coordinate with other localities as they redevelop and implement capital projects (ex. Redevelopment of the East End will occur soon).
- Help guide the TSU's activities and curriculum
- Better understand the relationship between the organization's long-term strategic plan and RPSD vision
- Validates the issues of residents served, such as the difficulty of finding suitable transportation and affordable housing
- Will help the organization's relationship with local governments
- May not have a direct effect on the organization's operations, but the strategies, if implemented, will help the organization be more effective at providing services
- The plan will provide a good rationale for investments/services
- The plan shows linkages between different projects/issues and the various topic areas
- The plan will need buy-in from leaders throughout the region, especially Harris County (largest locality)
 - There needs to be a change in current thinking regarding policy development and implementation.
 - More public input needed on local projects
 - Instead of thinking solely about cost, leaders need to think about other community benefits and sustainability when deciding to pursue certain projects/determining what projects to fund
- The region's universities should work together on interdisciplinary projects that help address sustainability and other issues of regional importance

Group 2:

- Incorporate the RPSD into local planning efforts
- Use the RPSD to highlight specific issues, i.e. water conservation, walking and biking actions.
- The need for specific implementation strategies.
- Challenge: The difference between land conservation and infill development
- Incorporate the RPSD into the comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS)

Group 3:

- Coordination with other governments and groups
- Leverage funding and encourage development
- Prepare for growth
- Allow for minimal disruption of current residents, while allowing for new growth
- Allow for changes to development codes and infrastructure planning
- Address how we reinforce and prepare for growth
- Roads and infrastructure
- Future funding efforts
- Coordinate with flood control districts
- Low-income areas targeted for investment

- Fair and affordable housing in complete neighborhoods
- Stormwater and sewer infrastructure
- Growth might not happen through annexation
- Foster coordination on affordable housing
- Resistance to affordable/multi-family housing
- Transfer knowledge between communities
- Air-quality, more competition for funding, how do we show benefits of the plan
- Need for transportation for alternative fuels beyond urban users
- Private sector role in Air Quality
- Silo-busting
- Funding
- Look at H-GAC differently- how is funding done?
- Look at focus group responses
- Better understanding of who needs to be contacted
- Who can make sure this plan is relevant?
- Help frame local and regional priorities

Group 4:

- Best practices for coordinating infrastructure investments
- Encourage policies and provide more subsidy for locating housing, including senior-living facilities near transit
- Improve quality of life in the region
- Get buy-in from elected officials
- Some voices are being heard more than others
- Identify key people that need to be engaged
- There is a need for simple messaging
- There is a need for context sensitive solutions
- How do we educate policy makers, developers, etc?
- How do we sustain agriculture?

7. Updates

Case Studies

A background paper providing updates on each case study was included in the meeting materials.

Correction: The City of Houston Case Study SAC meetings occurred on January 10th and February 13th, the pilot project tour was on February 12th, and there were public meetings on December 4th and 5th as well as February 13th and 14th.

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

A background paper providing an update on each the Fair Housing Equity Assessment was included in the meeting materials. Chuck Wemple added that there has been a lot of work between the Fair Housing

Equity Workgroup, the project consultant, Policy Link, and the Kirwan Institute. There will be a report on the progress of the study at the April Coordinating Committee meeting.

Public Engagement

A background paper providing an update on the public engagement process was included in the meeting materials.

Financial Report

Meredith Dang presented the monthly financial report, showing expenditures, balance and match and reminded Coordinating Committee members to contact Cheryl Mergo, if they would like to discuss ways to meet their in-kind match requirement.

8. Other Business

• MAP-21 Metrics

David Crossley stated that Houston Tomorrow will be hosting a MAP-21 discussion at its February 27 Livable Houston meeting.

Jeff Taebel stated that H-GAC will be sending a letter to Coordinating Committee members for public comments regarding the MAP-21 metrics that can be sent to FHWA.

9. Announcements

No announcements were made.

10. Future Meeting Dates

April 23, 10AM
H-GAC Conference Room A, Second Floor
3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027

June 25, 10 AM
H-GAC Conference Room A, Second Floor
3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

Action: Motion made by Joe Webb, seconded by Ron Drachenberg, to adjourn the meeting.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Please contact Meredith Dang, H-GAC
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