

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

**Public Participation Plan**

**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 MAP 21 (Moving Ahead For Progress in the Twenty-first Century).

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 2010 Census, 1,552,262 (42%) of the residents of Harris County listed a language other than English as the language spoken at home. Of the above 1,552,262 residents, 1,253,640 (81%) 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.harriscountytansit.com](http://www.harriscountytansit.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](http://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](http://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  
Jim Archer, METRO  
Ken Fickes, Harris County Transit  
Maria Palacios, Houston Center for Independent Living  
Mark Linenschmidt, City of League City  
Michael Worthy, City of Galveston  
Rachelle Alridge, 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.  
Amy Leyenbeck, 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, Jose Rameraze  
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