



Goal 8: Effective Partnerships with Other Agencies to Address Mobility Issues within and Beyond the City Borders

Like many large scale, important issues, mobility and transportation do not always fit nicely within political boundaries. Many of the mobility issues that the City will face in the future will require strong partners to implement successfully. Improvements to state facilities will require TxDOT support, regional transit may require partnering with Fort Bend County and METRO. With the development of the Comprehensive Mobility Plan, the City of Sugar Land has created a vision for what its future mobility system can look like. The City can now engage partners with a view on how to turn the vision into reality.

Strategies for Developing Effective Partnerships with Other Agencies to Address Mobility Issues within and Beyond the City Borders

Strategy #1 – Identify partners for projects that extend beyond the City borders

Initiative 1A – Initiate partnerships with state, regional and municipal agencies to implement projects that align with Sugar Land’s mobility goals and provide solutions to regional transportation issues

Sugar Land’s sustained growth and reputation as a strong, independent city form the foundation for continued development. An advantage to the City is its proximity to other growing and prosperous municipalities. Fort Bend County, neighboring cities like Missouri City, Stafford, Rosenberg and Houston all posted gains according to recent census estimates. Residents and businesses within this large metropolis have relative ease in seeking employment and employees throughout the region. Patrons do not feel bounded by geography or official maps when pursuing retail and service establishments. The result is a crisscross pattern of trips to, from and through Sugar Land. Since travelers access the freeways and roadways throughout the metropolis, it is important for Sugar Land to establish or maintain strong liaisons with other agencies dedicated to improving mobility and increasing travel options. Partners should include TxDOT, Fort Bend County, METRO, Houston Galveston Area Council, Gulf Coast Rail District and nearby cities. Also, liaisons should be established with Activity Center transportation groups (e.g., Downtown, Galleria/Uptown, Greenway Plaza, Texas Medical Center and Energy Corridor) and Transportation Management Organizations, such as TREK.

Agencies	Cities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Houston
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Missouri City
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stafford
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meadows Place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Richmond
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rosenberg

As outlined in previous sections of this report, Sugar Land mobility requires a compendium of transportation solutions from roads and streets, flexible work options, vanpooling, ITS and public transportation. Some aspects of the solutions can be done by Sugar Land, independently, but the majority of the high cost, long range regional proposals will be coordinated, multi-agency initiatives. These are not transportation goals just for Sugar Land, but are also in the best interest of Fort Bend County and other regional transportation entities. Indication that the City of Sugar Land is interested in the transport of its residents, employees and visitors to and from the region is the first step to initiating dialogue with the following transportation agencies.



Regional Transit Authorities: Comments from Sugar Land residents through the surveys, MAC meetings and public meetings indicated an interest in improved and more direct service to downtown Houston and other major employment destinations. Travel options to many employment centers are currently available, but do not constitute a competitive service option. Large numbers of employees from these areas live in Sugar Land. Discussions with existing transit entities, Fort Bend County Public Transportation Department and METRO could lead to options that would entice more people from their private vehicles. Moreover, establishing a pattern of communication and coordination is important for later dialogue about long term, capital intensive projects like bus rapid transit and/or rail services. Research conducted for TxDOT in 2008 showed three basic scenarios for formal multi-jurisdictional arrangements. One option creates a new entity designed to facilitate a consortium of interested jurisdictions. Galveston recently initiated such an organization, The Galveston County Urban and Rural Transportation District. The purpose of the new transportation district is to pull together the many municipalities in the county and speak in a single voice to negotiate with Houston Metro, the federal government and other entities regarding transportation projects and funding for the county. The second scenario, less likely for this region, is to dismantle existing entities to create a new regional transit agency comprised of the multiple jurisdictions and establish a new governing body. The District, operating in the Brazos Valley area (central and east Texas), is a multi-county transportation agency that provides multimodal transportation service in both urban and rural communities in that part of the region. The third option, most likely, is series of intergovernmental agreements delineating operating, financial and governing provision for participating entities. An important local organization in this category is the Gulf Coast Rail District as it has both passenger and freight rail responsibilities, with decisions important for Sugar Land. The Trinity Railway Express (TRE), which provides commuter rail service between Dallas and Fort Worth, is another example in North Texas. The TRE is a cooperative service provided by the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (The T) and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART).

School Districts: School districts offer one of the important areas for increased dialogue and future planning. Routing for school buses might be streamlined as decisions about new street patterns include consideration of how students will travel to school. The City of Sugar Land should be engaged in the school district's planning and site development process to ensure that mobility patterns to and from the new schools is consistent with the existing travel patterns and traffic conditions and that the new facility does not create greater congestion or safety issues for the students. Coordination can also support creating opportunities to allow a greater share of students to walk or bike to school.

Adjacent Cities: Major arterials that extend from adjacent municipalities in many cases include vehicles traveling through Sugar Land. Examples are US 90A, Highway 6, Dulles, Dairy Ashford/Sugar Creek, University Boulevard and Lexington Blvd. Actions taken in a jurisdiction outside Sugar Land could exacerbate traffic congestion in Sugar Land. For instance, a grade separation at one intersection along Highway 6 enabling traffic to avoid a traffic signal will allow more traffic to reach the next stopping point, creating congestion and shifting the problem downstream. Likewise, Sugar Land decisions could affect its neighbors; agreements to optimize traffic flow through contiguous cities will result in overall improved travel for all users. Joint planning activities and cooperative agreements can facilitate decision making and establish guidelines for communication.



Strategy #2 – Explore private services or partnerships that would benefit the City

Initiative 2A – Initiate Public Private Partnerships that promote a multimodal transportation system

A strong, positive relationship with the business community is essential for full effectiveness of Sugar Land's mobility plan. A future intracity circulator may rely on financial support from businesses and in-kind support for advertising or promotions as incentives for riders. Some passenger drop-off or pick-ups or bus turnaround locations may need to occur on private property. Coordination between Sugar Land and private interest in developing an intracity circulator can be a win-win opportunity for both entities, as the combined forces will effectively design a sustainable service that will best serve the private interests while promoting alternative mobility choices.

Initiating dialogue with Sugar Land private companies that have vehicles available for lease could provide an avenue for the circulator service. There may be more than one option available of service providers living in the City, which could facilitate starting the service. When investigating service options to the major employment centers in Houston, Central Houston (downtown), Texas Medical Center and TREK (Galleria/Greenway) work with the employers in their areas to ease the home to work trip. These entities might be allies in working to improve transit options for residents from Sugar Land.

Initiative 2B – Engage the development community, including the Development Committee, to improve integration of transportation goals in projects

The City of Sugar Land can implement a significant set of transportation and mobility improvements, but mobility benefits and challenges also exist on private properties. Proactive discussions on how development occurs and encouraging allowances for transit-friendly characteristics or pedestrian amenities that link to City facilities will benefit patrons accessing these properties in the future. Wider sidewalks, buffer areas between traffic lanes and where riders wait for buses are examples of development decisions that can facilitate transit use. Building construction with parking areas located in the rear of the site, also will prevent pedestrians or transit riders from needing to cross busy parking lots to access their destination.

Strategy #3 – Take leadership role with other entities whose facilities impact mobility in Sugar Land

Initiative 3A – Initiate dialogue with public and private entities, such as railroad companies and school districts, regarding anticipated growth and planned projects; work with entities to mitigate impact of plans/projects

There exists a tremendous opportunity to plan for Sugar Land's future and incorporate its vision of improved mobility. Future school locations, open space, and particularly residential environments can be designed to reduce circuitous travel by increasing connectivity between destinations. Developments that are bicycle and transit friendly reduce demands of passenger vehicles by making other modes more attractive. Sugar Land already began the concept of mixed use with the Town Square development. Residents of these areas can walk or bicycle to dinner and accommodate some shopping trips. Greater attention to these types of developments can continue to increase the number of non-motorized trips. The baseball park and Imperial Sugar site are prime candidates to include the concepts of developing with a mobility focus.



As freight rail continues to grow, with expectation for the UP Glidden line along US 90A to double in trains per day over the next 20 years, continuing to work with rail companies to both manage the impacts of noise and traffic and to support potential rail based economic development opportunities will be critical.

Metrics

Success in achieving effective partnerships will be experienced through a variety of mobility improvements. More transportation options, less time spent on congested roadways, connected bicycle and pedestrian paths, and better regional transit service will be evidence of liaisons with government and private sector partners. That noted, the following can also be assessed.

3 Year Average Funding Awarded: a rolling three year average of funding awarded to the City which will enable the City to leverage local fund to implement mobility projects.

Grant Application Success Rate: To successful develop grant applications required significant resources from City staff. The metric will track what % of the time that effort is rewarded through selection for funding through the various mobility related grant programs.

References

<http://www.city-data.com> (population numbers) Retrieved March 16, 2011.

Lewis, Carol A., Laura Higgins, Judy Perkins, Benjamin Zhan. (2008). **Regional Public Transportation Solutions for Intercity Commute Traffic**. Texas Department of Transportation 0-5345-3.