Bike, pedestrian, transit, and livable infrastructure spending of discretionary funds in the 2011 TIP
An opportunity for the Houston region to responsibly invest in communities of the future

The Houston - Galveston Area Council’s Transportation Policy Council (TPC) has wide discretion on the use of two Federal Highway Administration funds - Congestion Mitigation / Air Quality (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Program Major Metro (STP MM) - that may be used for bicycle, pedestrian, transit, livable centers, road, and freight rail projects.

A proposal at the February 2011 TPC meeting would have allocated in the 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) all remaining funds to road and freight rail projects as well as over $12 million previously promised to “Alternative Mode” projects across the region. Almost 3,000 Houstonians signed two independent petitions in less than a week and 20 citizens and community leaders spoke about the need for alternative mode spending to balance our regional infrastructure.

City of Houston Council Member Sue Lovell successfully proposed that the issue be put off for a month to give the TPC an opportunity to listen to citizen input and hold a special workshop on the issue.

H-GAC staff created 4 options for allocating this funding but none of these spend enough funds on multi-modal infrastructure projects that will actually improve the quality of life, protect the environment, support small local business and allow Houstonians the option to have a more active, healthy, lower-carbon lifestyle.

Houston Tomorrow has worked with diverse community groups to develop a reasonable Option 5 to allocate the remaining $79.8 million. We believe that no more than 55% of CMAQ and STP MM funds should be spent on roads in accordance with the goals and allocations of the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.

Retaining and adding funds for alternative modes will add bike trails and buses, widen sidewalks, and help Houstonians across the region lead safer and healthier lives, while also creating more jobs per dollar of spending than spending on new road construction. This decision will impact the communities, economy, and environment of the Houston region for the next several decades. Let’s choose the people’s priorities.

Calendar
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 16, 2011
9:30 a.m.

TPC Workshop on TIP Funding Allocations
Friday, March 25, 2011
8:30 a.m.

Transportation Policy Council Meeting
Friday, March 25, 2011
9:30 a.m.

All meetings: 3555 Timmons, 2nd Floor. Open to public.

H-GAC Transportation Improvement Program

Sign the Petition! Tell your friends & family!
http://petition.houstontomorrow.org
Option 5
A proposal for balanced multimodal spending for more jobs and healthier communities

Option 5 would allocate the full discretionary budget in the 2011 - 2014 TIP according to the principle of no more than 55% for roads and freight rail. This means allocating $13 million of the remaining funds for mobility, $65 million for alternative modes, and $1.7 million for planning.

There are plenty of projects ready in each category, with $235 million worth of alternative mode projects proposed across the region. The Houston region has a long history of not investing this much in alternative modes, and you can hear the results of investing too heavily in auto-dependent infrastructure every work day on radio traffic reports.

There is no procedural barrier keeping the TPC from allocating the funds in this way, in accordance with the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, which itself is based upon the visions and goals of citizens across the Houston region.

Please tell the members of the Houston - Galveston Area Council Transportation Policy Council how you would like them to allocate funds subject to local discretion and intended to improve air quality and reduce congestion.

Hon. James Patterson - Fort Bend County
Hon. Norman Brown - Liberty County
Hon. Ed Emmett - Harris County
Hon. Tom Reid - Smaller Cities, Brazoria County
Hon. Darrell Morrison, P.E. - City of Pasadena
Don Brandon, P.E. - Chambers County
Hon. Terry Sain - City of Baytown
Hon. Kenneth Clark - Galveston County
Delvin Dennis, P.E. - TxDOT Houston District
Hon. Craig Doyal - Montgomery County
Mark Ellis - Gulf Coast Rail District
Hon. Doug Kneupper - City of Texas City
Scott Elmer, P.E. - City of Missouri City
Hon. Stephen C. Costello - City of Houston
Steve Howard - H-GAC At-Large
Larry Calhoun - Montgomery County
Hon. Dianna Puccetti - City of Galveston
Stever Phelps - Other Transportation Interests
Hon. Sue Lovell - City of Houston
Mr. Daniel Kruger - City of Houston
Hon. Robert A. Fry, Jr. - Smaller Cities, Harris County
Hon. Jacqueline Baly-Chaumette - City of Sugar Land
Randall C. Redmond, P.E. - TxDOT Beaumont District
Orval Rhoads, P.E. - Waller County
Hon. Matt Sebesta - Brazoria County
Arthur L. Storey, P.E. - Harris County
George Greanias - METRO
Joseph Adams - Freight Rail Interests

Over 1900 people across the Houston region have signed this petition since it was initiated on February 22nd, 2011.

“I am troubled by the recent proposal to limit regional bike, pedestrian, transit, and livability funding for the Houston region in the proposed 2011 Transportation Improvement Program and to shift additional funding to road building. I urge my representatives on the Transportation Policy Council to vote against this proposal at their meeting on Friday, February 25 [or any future meeting].

Green infrastructure projects are crucial to the continued improvement of the quality of life, economy, and communities of the Houston region, and have been shown to create more jobs than the building of new roads, which will themselves increase pollution and vehicle miles traveled while causing the unnecessary destruction of Houston’s unique wildernesses and farmland.

Specifically, we support retaining and adding even more funding to bicycle and pedestrian projects, transit capital, and Livable Centers Initiative projects and reducing roadway improvements projects. I believe that - in accordance with the goals and spending targets of the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan - road building should be just one of many priorities making up no more than 55% of our regional transportation infrastructure spending.

Thank you for all that you do to improve the quality of life for all the people of the Houston region.”