

University of Houston Campus Transportation Project Proposal

Multimodal Transportation Centers

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The University of Houston is the largest university campus in the Houston region, with a student body of 35,000 undergraduates and graduates and employment for 4,000 faculty and staff. The 593 acre campus is located in the heart of the city, surrounded by the urban neighborhoods of the Third Ward and University Oaks and physically proximate to Houston's central business district. The university has a connection with the city that goes well beyond a shared geographic locale. The University of Houston is proud to reflect the region's racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. The majority of students (61 percent) are from Harris County, and 75 percent have jobs in addition to their course work. Historically, 88 percent of students have commuted to classes on campus. The university is an important economic generator for the region.

In 2005, the University of Houston adopted a strategic plan with goals to increase student enrollment by 10,000 students over a 10 to 20-year period and to expand academic, research, and student housing facilities in support of this growth. The university has committed to a series of initiatives that will reposition the institution to a Tier One University. There are two key challenges to be faced. First, the physical plant will grow by almost 50 percent in order to accommodate the expanded academic and research program and a 30 percent larger student body. Second, a change in culture will transform the university from an almost exclusive commuter campus, to a community where students live, learn, and socialize on campus. Residential facilities will expand to house 25 percent of the student body as compared to the current 12 percent. The university will expand as an activity center of regional significance, serving as a residential, cultural, and civic center for the city as well as major employer and academic institution.

The new on-campus development will be mixed-use that integrates academic space, retail and entertainment, the arts, and social venues with market-type housing that caters to working students, students with families, and students who tend to be older than most collegians. The University of Houston will develop the campus as a "livable community" with good pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections. Transit will be emphasized as the priority mode of transportation for access to the university. With carefully designed land uses in a compact area, students, faculty, employees and visitors will have the opportunity to accomplish various activities without using a



car. Careful design and planning of parking structures will minimize their impact on the visual and pedestrian environments while maximizing their convenience and accessibility.

The campus area currently experiences approximately 125,000 vehicle trips per weekday, with an expected increase to over 160,000 within the next decade. To mitigate the impact of this growth, the university collaborated with regional transportation agencies (City of Houston, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Houston-Galveston Area Council, and Texas Department of Transportation) to develop the January 2009 UH Transportation Management Plan. The plan calls for a reduction in vehicle trips by a minimum of 10 percent (12,500 to 16,000 vehicle trips per day) by providing convenient access to rail and bus transit, vanpools/carpools, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation. To achieve this goal, both local and regional (commute trips) must be by modes other than individuals driving alone. By reducing vehicle trips, the university's transportation plan will reduce congestion, conserve limited energy resources, and help to improve air quality.

In order to accomplish this transit goal, the University of Houston proposes a coordinated transportation effort that includes developing multimodal transportation centers at each of the three METRO light rail stations that will be constructed along the perimeter of the campus. One station is served by the Southeast rail line; one station is served by the University rail line; and one station is served by both rail lines. A campus loop road will provide the pathway for the campus shuttle bus to distribute trips to destinations interior to the campus and also provide the demarcation for an auto-free zone for the campus. The integrated modes of transportation for the campus and surrounding area are illustrated in Exhibit 1.

Each transportation center will incorporate choices for multimodal transportation for regional and local trips, combined with campus information and welcome centers. Each multimodal center will feature grade-separated access to the METRO light rail station in the median of the roadway, safe pedestrian crossings at-grade where required, a transit center for METRO local and regional bus routes and the campus shuttle bus, and connections to pedestrian paths and bikeways. By encouraging more walk and bike trips, the transportation plan will help to provide a healthier environment for the university family. The university is also developing residential housing in the areas adjacent to the transportation centers, so that transit will be a convenient mode of transportation within easy walking distance. The residential developments will be designed with amenities such as convenience foods and informational booths to assist with way



finding. Exhibit 2 shows a conceptual layout for a Multimodal Transportation Center on Elgin at Cullen.

The multimodal transportation center design will include structured parking to preserve the environment by requiring less land for surface parking than existing parking lots. The parking structures will reduce the amount of impervious surface in the region's watersheds. The university plan will provide adequate parking in these convenient locations without creating an oversupply. As a special generator of regional trips for sporting, entertainment, and academic events, the University of Houston also features activities at different times of the day and week, thus creating balanced transit ridership and allowing for shared parking. By providing parking adjacent to the rail stations and the bus transit centers, the multimodal transportation centers will intercept and reduce vehicle trips while increasing transit ridership.

The University of Houston's goal is to implement a multimodal transportation plan to achieve a seamless integration of the METRO light rail corridors into the campus and surrounding community. This coordination will significantly increase ridership for METRO, improve access to and from the university and the adjacent residential areas, and enable the university to handle a larger portion of its projected increase in daily person trips (both originating and terminating at the campus) without a corresponding increase in vehicle trips. With additional mobility choices, the University of Houston transportation plan will produce economic, environmental and "quality of place" benefits for the region.

The University of Houston proposes to incorporate multimodal transportation centers and a sustainable mobility plan in the university's strategic master plan for development. By planning a livable community that features multimodal transportation choices, connectivity, and accessibility, the University of Houston is reinforcing the concept of local initiative to accomplish regional transportation goals. The opportunity to pursue regional funding for transportation capital investments will make it possible to see the vision implemented sooner. The University of Houston looks forward to building on partnerships to leverage the university's investment to attract additional funding partners.

