

Fort Bend County Public Transportation Department

METRO Call for Projects Section 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities Program New Transit Vehicles for Downtown Houston Service



APPROVED BY FORT BEND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

September 11, 2018

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CALL FOR PROJECTS INFORMATION

Applicant DUNS: 08-149-7075

Application Name of this Submission: Fort Bend County
 Otherwise Known As: Fort Bend County Public Transportation
 Agency Identification: State/Local Governmental Entity/Authority
 Submitter's Name and Contact Information: Yvette R. Maldonado
 Finance & Administration Manager
 281-633-7433
Yvette.Maldonado@fortbendcountytexas.gov

CFDA Description: Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Program
 Agency Name: METRO

AGENCY PROFILE

Year in Business: Thirteen (13) Years

Annual Budget: ≈\$10 Million

Number of Employees: Twenty-two (22) Full Time Employees
 One (1) Part Time Employee
 Eighty-Two (82) Transit Service Contractor Employees
 Fourteen (14) Ambassador Service Contractor Employees

*Fleet Size: Forty-seven (47) Vehicles
 *Fort Bend County has an active fleet of 47 vehicles, but also use vehicles provided through our Service Contractor.

INTRODUCTION

Fort Bend County (FBC) is located 15 miles southwest of Houston, Texas. As of the 2010 census, its population was more than 500,000, making it the 10th most populous county in Texas. The 2016 Census Bureau estimate for Fort Bend County's population is 741,237. Fort Bend County's Public Transportation Department (FBCPT) was officially formed in 2005. Fort Bend County Public Transportation is characterized by three main types of service: demand response/para-transit, deviated fixed route and commuter/fixed route services. All services for Fort Bend County are general public shared ride services and are directly operated by one service contractor, First Transit, Inc.

Demand response/para-transit services are provided to/from all locations within Fort Bend County and locations up to one (1) mile outside the boundaries of Fort Bend County. Operating hours for Demand Response services vary according to trip requests. In most cases, first drop-offs are scheduled for 8:00 a.m. and last pick-ups are scheduled for 5:00 p.m. Fort Bend County also has a contract for an Ambassador Program. An Ambassador is an individual who assists passengers from their front door to the vehicle and from the vehicle to their final destination. This personalized service is to provide assistance for

passengers unable to travel unescorted/alone, who need additional help with boarding and alighting vehicles, and with agitation, behavioral and cognitive issues. Ambassadors may be assigned to bus stop locations and/or transit vehicles.

Deviated fixed route services travel specifically within the cities of Richmond and Rosenberg with designated stops. If scheduled, buses can deviate short distances from a route to pick-up/drop-off passengers. Operating hours for Deviated fixed route services are provided according to published schedules. Services may begin as early as 6:30 a.m. and end as late as 5:45 p.m.

Commuter/fixed route services are provided from three Park & Ride locations within Fort Bend County. Park and Ride locations include Fort Bend County Fairgrounds located in Rosenberg, Texas; University of Houston - Sugar Land located in Sugar Land, Texas; and the AMC Theater - First Colony located in Sugar Land, Texas. Services are designed primarily to accommodate employment transportation needs but are open to the general public. Buses operate along the I-69 corridor to the Greenway Plaza, Galleria, and Texas Medical Center areas of Houston. The Greenway Plaza route is the only route that makes a transfer stop at METRO's West Bellfort Park and Ride, which offers service to downtown Houston. Operating hours for Commuter services are provided according to published schedules. Services may begin as early as 5:30 a.m. and end as late as 8:30 p.m.

An analysis of travel demand combined with the survey results demonstrate a significant demand for new transit service to Downtown Houston, notably from the Sugar Land area. Fort Bend County has collaborated with Central Houston to develop and expand the existing commuter route services to include services directly to downtown Houston. In 2010, approximately 13,700 people living in Fort Bend County commuted to their primary job in downtown Houston. In 2015, Fort Bend County residents made over 32,000 trips per day to downtown Houston. By 2040, this number is projected to increase by 43 percent increasing current services to over 46,000 trips per day.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Fort Bend County is seeking \$3,867,370 in federal funding with Transportation Development Credits (TDCs) in the amount of \$580,106, in lieu of local match, for the acquisition of twenty-six (26) 40-passenger commuter service vehicles, which are projected to cost \$148,745 each. These vehicles will be for Central Houston/Downtown commuter service expansion.

ELIGIBILITY

Fort Bend County is an existing Federal grantee, a direct recipient, and an operator of public transportation. Fort Bend County currently receives funding under Section 5307, 5310, 5311, 5339, Air Quality Congestion Mitigation, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

DEMONSTRATION OF BENEFIT

The Houston-Galveston metropolitan planning area includes eight counties and four urbanized areas. The Houston UZA and Conroe–The Woodlands UZA each have a population over 200,000; therefore, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) classifies each as a “large” UZA. Table 1 provides the population and area of each county and UZA in the metropolitan planning area. Figure 1 provides a map of the counties and UZAs in the region.

Currently, direct transit service is not available for Fort Bend County residents to commute to downtown Houston. According to the FBCPT Long Range Plan survey respondents, downtown Houston is the most requested destination for new commuter service. A series of interviews with elected officials and key stakeholders has also been conducted for a more thorough understanding of local context and transit issues facing communities in Fort Bend. These interviews also revealed a growing need for new commuter service to Downtown Houston.

Downtown Houston is a large driver of trips for the entire region. As previously stated, in 2010 approximately 13,700 people living in Fort Bend County commuted to their primary job in downtown Houston. In 2015, Fort Bend County residents made over 32,000 trips per day to downtown Houston. By 2040, this number is projected to increase by 43 percent increasing current services to over 46,000 trips per day.

A thorough analysis of travel demands combined with the Long Range Plan survey results demonstrate a significant need for new transit services to downtown Houston, notably from the Sugar Land area. Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) reviewed data from a 2012 license plate survey of vehicles parked at METRO Park & Ride facilities, provided courtesy of METRO. The survey focused on the Westwood and West Bellfort Park & Ride facilities located along the US 59 corridor. Both Park & Rides afford FBC residents the opportunity to drive several miles, park, and ride an express route into downtown Houston. Figure 3 depicts the general distribution of existing METRO Park & Ride users’ home origins. The majority of origins are in Sugar Land or the surrounding neighborhood communities. The METRO 2012 license plate survey corroborate the estimate of latent demand in FBC. A substantial share of current METRO Park & Ride users, nearly 50 percent, drive from Sugar Land in FBC (e.g., First Colony, Commonwealth, North Sugar Land) or from the city’s extra-territorial jurisdiction (e.g., New Territory, Greatwood) to METRO’s Westwood and West Bellfort Park & Ride facilities in order to ride transit to downtown Houston. In 2040, it is anticipated that trips to downtown Houston are expected to disperse within the county, causing a growing number of trips to originate in Richmond and Rosenberg, particularly along the US 59 corridor. Other notable areas of projected growth include pockets of northern and eastern parts of the county, particularly Sienna Plantation and along FM 521.

Using Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data from Census Bureau 2010, approximately 3,100 workers traveled from the planned park and ride location to downtown Houston each day. If every worker used these services, the result would be

6,200 transit trips per day. However, only a portion of the population will actually utilize commuter transit service for their commute. Using case study information, we were able to project the following trips:

Low: 10.7% capture rate X 6,200 transit trips = demand for 665 commuter trips per day

Medium: 17.8% capture rate X 6,200 transit trips = demand for 1,100 commuter trips per day

High: 28.2% capture rate X 6,200 transit trips = demand for 1,747 commuter trips per day

This new proposed service would utilize 26 40-passenger vehicles to connect riders from Fort Bend County directly into downtown Houston on a service operated by FBC Public Transportation and operate from existing park and ride locations along the US 59 corridor in Sugar Land and Rosenberg. Riders would pay one fare and travel directly from these locations into and out of downtown Houston.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Fort Bend County will be requesting Transportation Development Credits (TDC) in lieu of local match.

If TDC's are unavailable, Fort Bend County is prepared to contribute the fifteen percent local match requirement for a total of \$580,106. These funds would come from Fort Bend County Public Transportation Department's FY19 local match budget and will be available for use upon award. Fort Bend County's General Revenue Fund would provide matching funds for this project.

FIVE YEAR EXPENDITURE PLAN

All services operated by Fort Bend County are included in the region's transportation plan. If awarded, this project will be added to the TIP/STIP. This project also supports a long-term relationship and coordination between Fort Bend County, Central Houston, Chevron, City of Sugar Land and METRO.

Fort Bend County currently has a contract for vehicle purchases. After execution of the grant award, it is reasonably anticipated the vehicles will be ordered, received, inspected, and paid for in less than an 18-month period.

Grant Award	November 2018
Vehicle Orders	August 2019
First Vehicle Delivered	January 2020
Last Vehicle Delivered	February 2020

Project Completion

March 2020

Research estimates each bus to operate 139 miles per day (35,000 miles per year), including non-revenue mileage. Using FTA Useful Life Standards, the useful life of the vehicles is seven (7) years and 200,000 miles. These vehicles will be incorporated into FBCPT's Transit Asset Management Plan, will be part of the vehicle replacement plan, and scheduled for replacement through Section 5307 or Section 5339 funding, as needed.

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

See Table 3.

TECHNICAL, LEGAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Fort Bend County has purchased over 50 rolling stock vehicles to support Public Transportation services since 2005. The County is very familiar with rolling stock procurement requirements and is well equipped to undertake this project.

Paulette Shelton serves as the County's Transportation Director and brings over 20 years of experience in transportation management and operations. Ms. Shelton is heavily involved both locally and statewide with transit issues, and her significant experience in public transportation has resulted in her appointment to several transit task forces and committees. Russell Gerami serves as the County's Public Transportation Operations Supervisor and brings 30 years of experience in transit operations. Yvette Maldonado serves as the Finance & Administration Manager and brings 13 years of experience in grants management of which nine years have been in public transportation.

Additionally, the Public Transportation staff is augmented and supported by other Fort Bend County departments that provide specialized services and enable Public Transportation to execute necessary functions. These departments include Purchasing, Risk Management, Treasury, Auditing, Legal and Human Resources.

Financial systems are monitored and maintained by the Fort Bend County Auditor's Office in conjunction with the Fort Bend County Treasurer's Office. Outside auditors perform the federally required single audit assess financial systems annually. The County received an unqualified/unmodified opinion on its 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial report. Fort Bend County's financial reports are accessible online at <http://www.fortbendcountytx.gov/index.aspx?page=392>.

ATTACHMENTS

Table 1. Area Population and Size

The population and area of each county and UZA in the metropolitan planning area.

County	2000 Population	2010 Population	2010 Area (Sq. Mi.)
Brazoria County	241,767	313,166	1,386
Chambers County	26,031	35,096	599
Fort Bend County	354,452	585,375	875
Galveston County	250,158	291,309	398
Harris County	3,400,578	4,092,459	1,729
Liberty County	70,154	75,643	1,160
Waller County	32,663	43,205	514
Montgomery County	293,768	455,746	1,044
Total	4,566,754	5,891,999	7,705
Houston UZA	3,822,509	4,944,332	1,295
Conroe–The Woodlands UZA	89,445	239,938	42
Texas City UZA	96,417	106,383	59
Lake Jackson-Angleton UZA	73,416	74,830	34

Source: U.S. Census Decennial Census, 2000 and 2010

Table 2. Houston UZA and FBC Growth 2000 to 2010

There was significant growth in Fort Bend County's UZA land area and population between 2000 and 2010. Fort Bend County UZA population accounted for 8 percent of the Houston UZA total in 2000 and increased to 11 percent in 2010. The overall county population, urban and rural, increased from 354,452 in 2000 to 585,375 in 2010—a 65 percent increase.

Houston UZA		Census 2000		Census 2010		Change 2000 – 2010	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of County Total</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of County Total</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
		3,822,509	-	4,944,332	-	1,121,823	29.3%
FORT BEND COUNTY	Houston UZA	316,561	89.3%	547,198	93.5%	230,637	72.9%
	Percent of UZA	8.3%	-	11.1%	-	-	-
	Non-urbanized	37,891	10.7%	38,177	6.5%	286	0.8%
	County Total	354,452	100%	585,375	100%	230,923	65.1%

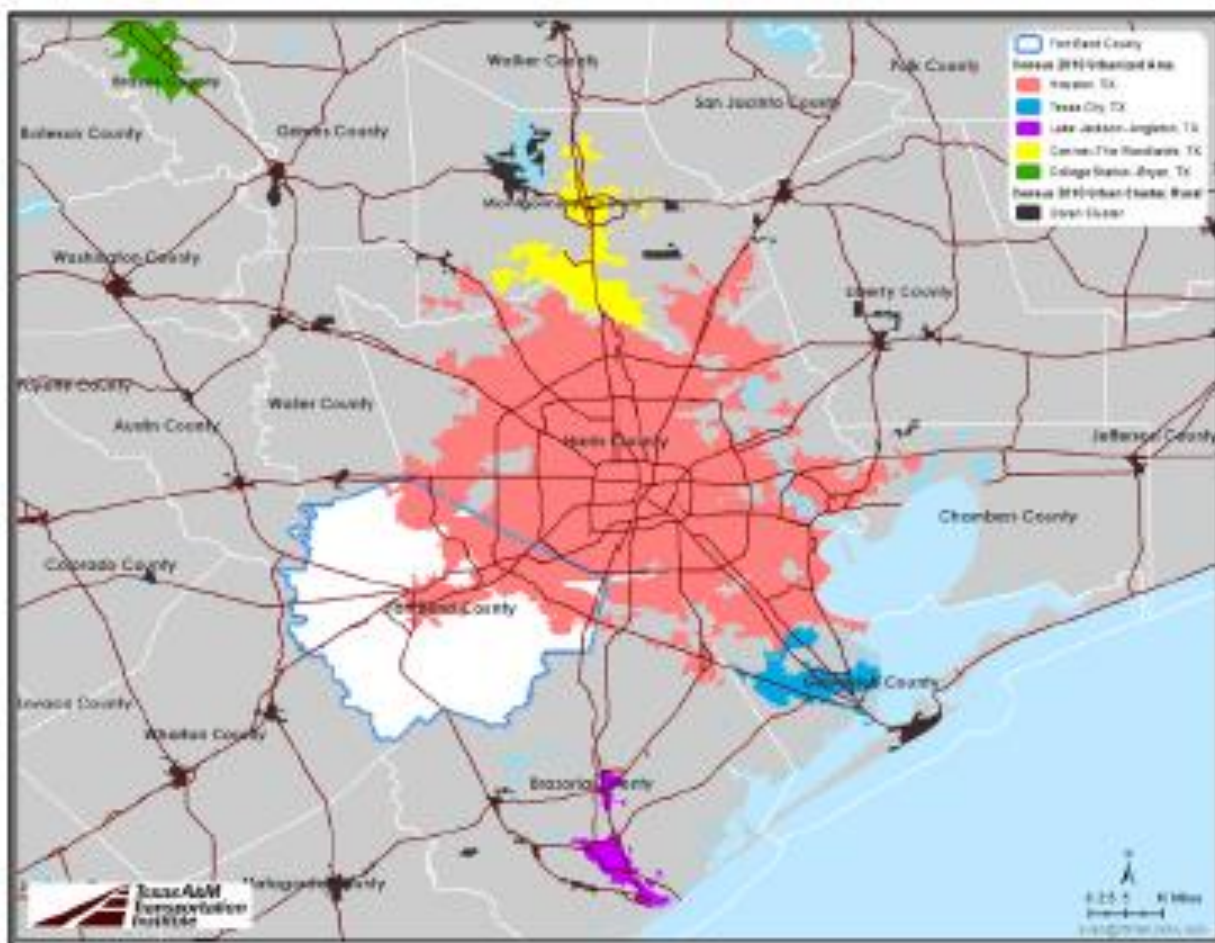
Source: Census 2000 and 2010; TTI analysis.

Table 3. Risk Assessment Form

5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program
5337 State of Good Repair Formula Grant Program
5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grant Program

Agency: Fort Bend County	If yes, please give details including awarding agency.
Date: August 30, 2018	
1. Have you had a grant closed due to material noncompliance in the last 5 years?	NO
2. Have you failed to make substantial progress on past grants?	NO
3. Do you have no experience with a similar Grant Program?	NO
4. Do you have qualified auditor's opinion on a financial statement in the past five years? If so provide details.	NO
5. Do you have questioned costs on single audits in the last five years? If so, provide details.	NO
6. Have you had an audit finding relating to cash management in the last five years? If so provide details.	NO

Figure 1. UZAs in the Houston-Galveston Region
 Map of the counties and UZAs in the region.



Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, TTI Analysis

Figure 2. Daily Trips to Downtown Houston

In 2015, these trips largely originate in the north and northeast parts of the county (Sugar Land, Missouri City, Fulshear, and other areas around Westpark Tollway). Other areas with high concentrations of Downtown Houston trips include SH 6, FM 521 and US 59 corridors.

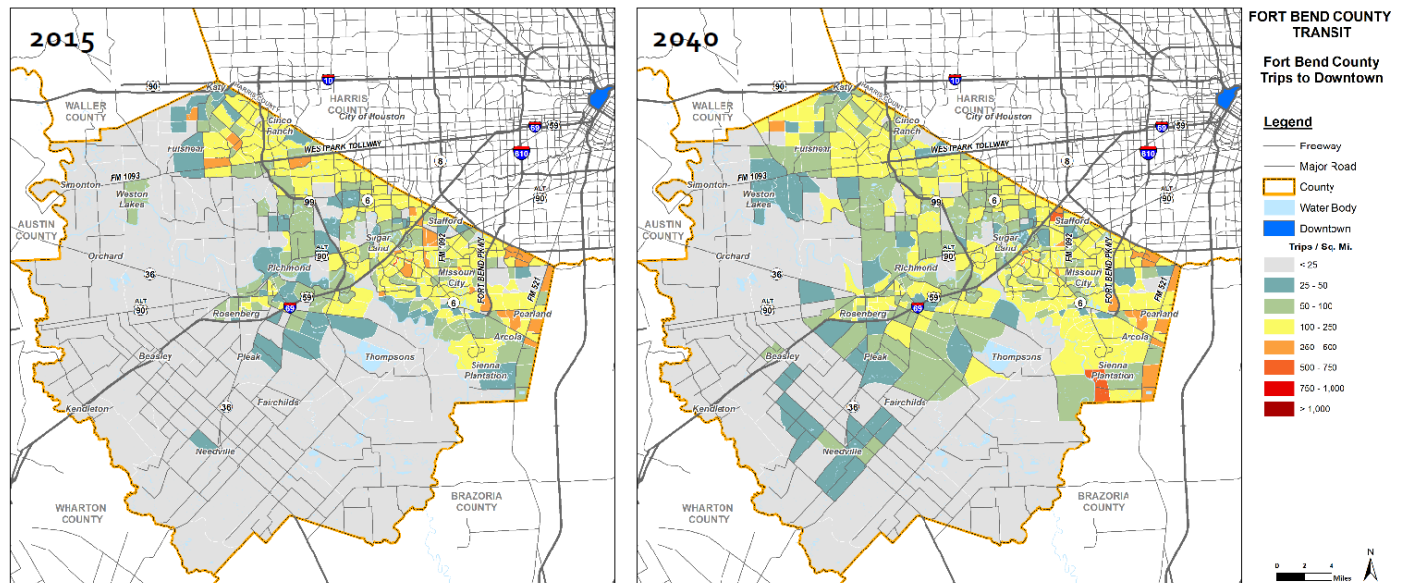
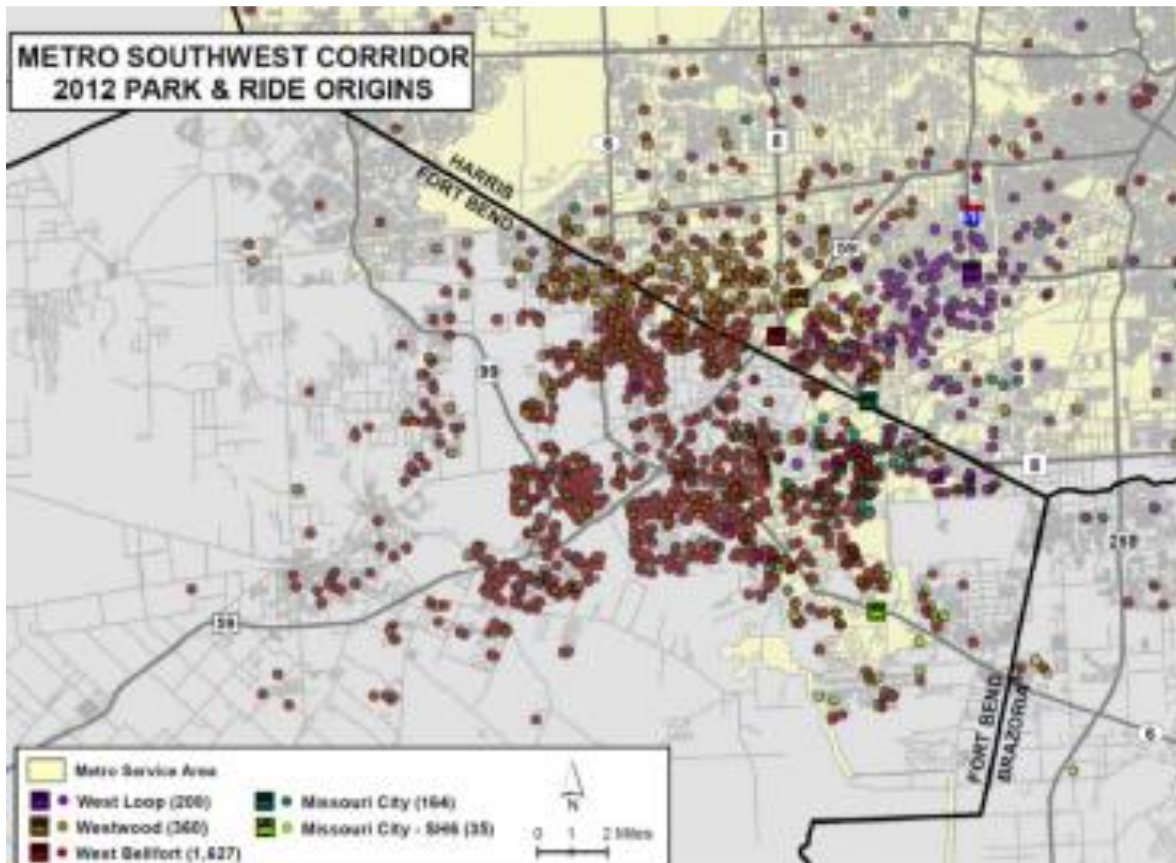
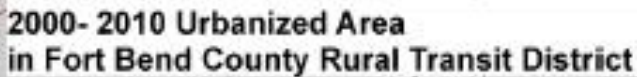


Figure 3. 2012 METRO Park and Ride Origins along US 59 Corridor
Depicts the general distribution of existing METRO Park & Ride users' home origins.
The majority of origins are in Sugar Land or the surrounding neighborhood communities.



The FBC Transit service area (in yellow) and the Census 2010 urbanized area (in green). The blue portion represents the METRO service area.

By:  Texas A&M
Transportation
Institute

Letters of Support



September 4, 2018

Mr. Albert Lyne
METRO Director of Grant Programs
1900 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002

Re: Expansion of Fort Bend County Public Transportation Park & Ride Service to
Downtown Houston

Dear Mr. Lyne:

Central Houston, Inc. is a 501(c) (6) business league comprised of more than 130 member organizations, which serves as the steward of Houston's vision for the redevelopment and revitalization of Downtown. Over the past 30 years, Central Houston has facilitated many of the public and private projects that have transformed Downtown, by enhancing collaboration among governmental entities, developers, and businesses.

Since 2010, the Central Houston Transportation Committee and Fort Bend County Public Transportation have collaborated to determine the best means of providing seamless Park & Ride Service from Fort Bend County to Downtown Houston. In 2012, with financial support from Central Houston, Inc., Fort Bend County Public Transportation engaged the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to provide background research and assist in the development of a plan to implement said service. The work products produced by TTI throughout this process are available as <https://groups.tti.tamu.edu/transit-mobility/resources/commuteworkgrp/>.

Central Houston is pleased to provide this letter of support for Fort Bend County Public Transportation's grant application for Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Program funds to support the acquisition of 26 transit vehicles. This application will assist in our multi-year partnership to develop commuter transit services from Fort Bend County to Downtown Houston. Fort Bend County Public Transportation has been a reliable partner throughout this process and we welcome the opportunity to support their program. They continually demonstrate commitment and determination to create real, positive, and enduring benefits for the residents of Fort Bend County and the region.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Eury
Executive Director

Cc: Paulette Shelton, Fort Bend County Public Transportation

September 11, 2018

Albert Lyne, CPA, PMP
Director Grant Programs
Houston METRO

Via Email Application Submittal

Subject: METRO Call for Projects
Letter of Local Match Support for FY18 Section 5339
Grant Application for Buses and Bus Facilities Program
New Transit Vehicles for Downtown Houston Service

Dear Mr. Lyne:

Regarding the request for grant funding to support our Buses and Bus Facilities Program, this letter will confirm the County's request for transportation development credits in lieu of the required local match. If transportation development credits are not available to match the attached request for federal funding under the Section 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities Program, the local match of fifteen percent would be provided from Fort Bend County General Revenue FY 2019 funds. As proposed, \$580,106 would be used as the local cash match share.

If you have any questions regarding this application or need any additional information, please contact Yvette R. Maldonado in the Public Transportation Department as 281-633-7433, or by email at Yvette.Maldonado@fortbendcountytexas.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert Hebert
County Judge