

## **Program implementation**

The overall strategy for the Gulf Freeway/SH 3 corridor includes a phased implementation program. Commuter rail in the GH&H from Galveston to downtown Houston would be selected as the ultimate LPA with a package of TSM improvements to be implemented in the corridor as the first phase.

### **Short-term operations**

- Introduce bus service along SH 3 to link the communities in the corridor from Texas City and La Marque to Webster. At Webster the service can connect to METRO's Bay Area Park & Ride and take advantage of the extended HOV lane on the Gulf Freeway.
- The service on SH 3 would stop at key locations in the corridor; providing connectivity with existing and proposed local circulator service.
- Peak hour diamond lanes could be provided in the median between the communities and on the outside lanes in segments where it would make stops to connect to the local transit service and local destinations.
- The SH 3 service could have transit signal priority and possibly grade separations at key locations where cross traffic would cause delays and impact transit service. TxDOT has identified two locations for overpasses on SH 3 and there may be an opportunity to contribute to the cost of the overpasses to include transit and expedite their construction.

### **Mid-term operations**

- As the service on SH 3 matures and circulator service in the in the corridor communities is established, local stops could be consolidated to correspond with future CRT station locations.
- The consolidated stations would be fed with local circulator service.
- Park & ride lots could be built at certain locations that can be used after commuter rail is introduced in the corridor, such as in League City and Dickinson where SH 3 separates from the GH&H right-of-way. Individual lots could possibly be environmentally cleared with a Categorical Exclusion (CE).
- Service on SH 3 could be extended northward inside Beltway 8 to include South Houston and Pasadena, and possibly to the East End light rail line. A connection to the Gulf Freeway HOV lane could be made at the Monroe Park & Ride.
- Identify capital improvements in the corridor that could support the implementation of CRT in the future, such as grade separations and additional right-of-way.

### **Long-term operations**

- The last phase of the program would be the introduction of commuter rail in the GH&H right-of-way.
- The bus service along SH 3 would be eliminated and the circulators would feed the commuter rail stations, providing links to community destinations.
- Parking would need to be provided at the stations that were not able to have parking associated with the SH 3 service.
- As part of the long-term implementation of commuter rail, transition plans for the existing park & ride facilities would need to be developed. Some facilities that serve different markets could continue service to downtown, but others may need to be directed to other destinations, such as the TMC or Greenway Plaza and Uptown. The existing and proposed facilities in the corridor include:
  - Monroe P&R,
  - Fuqua/Southpoint P&Rs,
  - Bay Area P&R and park & pool,
  - Eldorado P&R (in development),
  - Victory Lakes P&R (in development) to Galveston,
  - Mall of the Mainland P&R (possible relocation) to Galveston.

## **UPRR negotiations**

Parallel with the short- and mid-term phases of developing the bus service in the SH 3 corridor, the appropriate entities (Galveston County, METRO, Gulf Coast Rail District, others) would pursue negotiations with UP to purchase or lease the GH&H right-of-way. A Letter of No Prejudice (LONP) from the FTA may be necessary prior to any agreement with UP for the use of the right-of-way.

### **Project Development**

Once local and federal funding becomes feasible and the bus service on SH 3 has established a transit market, project development for CRT can begin. The first step would be to publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register stating the intent to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement and apply for permission to enter into Preliminary Engineering for CRT in the GH&H right-of-way. Scoping for the project would have to be initiated according to NEPA standards and would include presenting the findings of the previously conducted AA and the resultant LPA with an update on the implementation of TSM in SH 3.

A Scoping Results Report would be prepared after the scoping period is closed to document suggestions on new alternatives and the original LPA. Once the scoping requirements are met, the PE application process could begin. The New Starts process could also be initiated at this time.