WHAT IS AN INTERMODAL TRANSIT FACILITY?

An intermodal transit facility gathers many modes of transportation together and is strategically located to increase destination alternatives. Intermodal facilities can help to improve mobility for a city and a region.

Intermodal facilities usually have services and amenities for transportation patrons, such as ticket booths, secure and comfortable waiting rooms, restrooms, food service, newsstands, and gift shops.

Some intermodal facilities are part of larger developments that include retail, offices, residential, hotel rooms, and entertainment venues.

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s Union Station is an example of an intermodal facility that provides major transit service connections from throughout Los Angeles County and beyond. More than 50,000 trips are made through Union Station on a daily basis, which includes trips made via METRO Bus and Rail, Metrolink, AMTRAK and various municipal bus operators. Recent service additions include the FlyAway Airport Shuttle.
Northern Intermodal Transit Facility

Modes of Transportation That Could Be Included

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Light Rail Transit (LRT)
- Local and Regional Bus
- Commuter Rail
- Taxi Service
- Paratransit Service
- Shuttle Bus Service
- AMTRAK
- Commercial Bus
Northern Intermodal Transit Facility

INTERMODAL TRANSIT FACILITIES IN OTHER CITIES

- Tower City Center - Cleveland, Ohio
- Union Station - Los Angeles, California
- Gateway Plaza - Los Angeles, California
- Science City at Union Station - Kansas City, Missouri
In 2005, the Houston Downtown Management District initiated a feasibility study of an intermodal facility. The study analyzed and presented the best option for the facility’s location. Seven general areas within the Houston metropolitan region were initially identified as candidates for accommodating multiple transportation programs for numerous transportation providers.

An area north of downtown Houston was selected as the preferred location because of its proximity to Houston’s major activity centers and existing and future transit and transportation projects including national and international bus carriers. This location also provides the greatest opportunity for connecting existing and proposed infrastructure.
The White Oak and Hardy Yards areas were identified as the preferred areas for the Northern Intermodal Transit Facility.

These highly visible locations allow for opportunities for:
• Intermodal connectivity with transit and freeway access;
• The best overall proximity to major regional activity center; and
• The most compatible land use for an Intermodal Center/Multimodal Terminal facility.

The White Oak sub-area is located northeast of the IH 45/IH 10 interchange near north downtown Houston.

The Hardy Yards sub-area is located between Northside Village residential area and the multi-track Union Pacific Hardy Rail Yards.
Northern Intermodal Transit Facility

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE INTERMODAL FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

AMTRAK
Central Houston
City of Houston
First Ward Civic Council
Greater East End Management District
Greater Greenspoint Municipal Management District
Greyhound Bus Lines
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Harris County
Houston Airport System
Houston Downtown Management District

Main Street Coalition
Midtown Management District
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
Northside BOND
Old Sixth Ward
Silverdale Civic Association
South Main Center Association
Texas Department of Transportation
University of Houston - Downtown
METRO intends to pursue the design and construction of the Northern Intermodal Transit Facility that would serve as a major transportation hub for Houston. This facility would enable Houston residents, visitors, and workers to easily transfer between the different modes of transit—buses, light rail, bus rapid transit, and commercial bus lines. The facility could potentially provide service to airport shuttles, commuter rail, taxis, and national passenger rail (AMTRAK) services in the future.

This facility will improve public access to bus and rail services to meet current and future transit needs; reduce non-transit vehicle usage; and promote transit-friendly development.
Northern Intermodal Transit Facility

POTENTIAL ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

[Diagram showing potential access improvements with labels for BRT north corridor, transit center, existing rail, main, and LRT north corridor.]
WHAT IS NEPA?

The primary law governing the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) environmental protection process is the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) establishes an umbrella process for coordinating compliance with each law.

Because the Northern Intermodal Transit Facility project aims to create a new transit facility and METRO intends to pursue some federal funding for the project, FTA requires that an Environmental Assessment (EA) be completed to comply with NEPA.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT?

An EA is a document that evaluates the proposed project. Other regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Texas Historical Commission are involved throughout the process.

The EA document:

- Evaluates the project for potential social, economic, or environmental impacts;
- Identifies alternatives and measures that might mitigate adverse environmental impacts; and
- Initiates coordination with regulatory agencies.

Public involvement is an essential element of the EA process. The final document must be made available for public inspection and a public hearing may be held.
ELEMENTS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ELEMENTS ANALYZED DURING THE EA PROCESS

Social & Economic Impacts
Air Quality
Endangered Species
Environmental Justice
Floodplains
Hazardous Materials & Brownfields
Historic, Archeological, and Cultural Resources
Navigable Waterways and Coastal Zones
Noise and Vibration
Parklands

Transportation Impacts
Water Quality
Wetlands

METRO Solutions
Commonly called the Section 106 process, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470) requires projects which include federal participation to take into account the effects on any properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, Section 106 requires that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) must be provided with an opportunity to comment on the project. Historic properties may include districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects.

Archeological sites are also protected under the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Section 106 process is applied in a similar fashion when a mass transit project involves excavation of any kind.
SITE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Site development issues for consideration include:

- Safety & Security
- Neighborhood Cohesion
- Pedestrian Access
- Vehicular Circulation
- Visibility

In addition, the introduction of the new transit facility could spawn transit-friendly development. This development could include a mix of high density residential and commercial development within walking distance of the facility.

Example of transit-oriented development at Mockingbird Station
Dallas, Texas
Feasibility analysis - this analysis sought to solicit input from stakeholders; determine the best location for the facility; and build a cohesive group of Intermodal facility stakeholders to support funding applications for the facility;

Planning Basis for Design - where project costs, benefits, and impacts are refined; Federal environmental studies are completed; and local funding commitments are secured;

Preliminary Engineering - where project engineering and probable costs are developed; and

Final Design - which includes right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and the preparation of final construction plans.