



Collaboration and Innovation in the Houston-Galveston Region

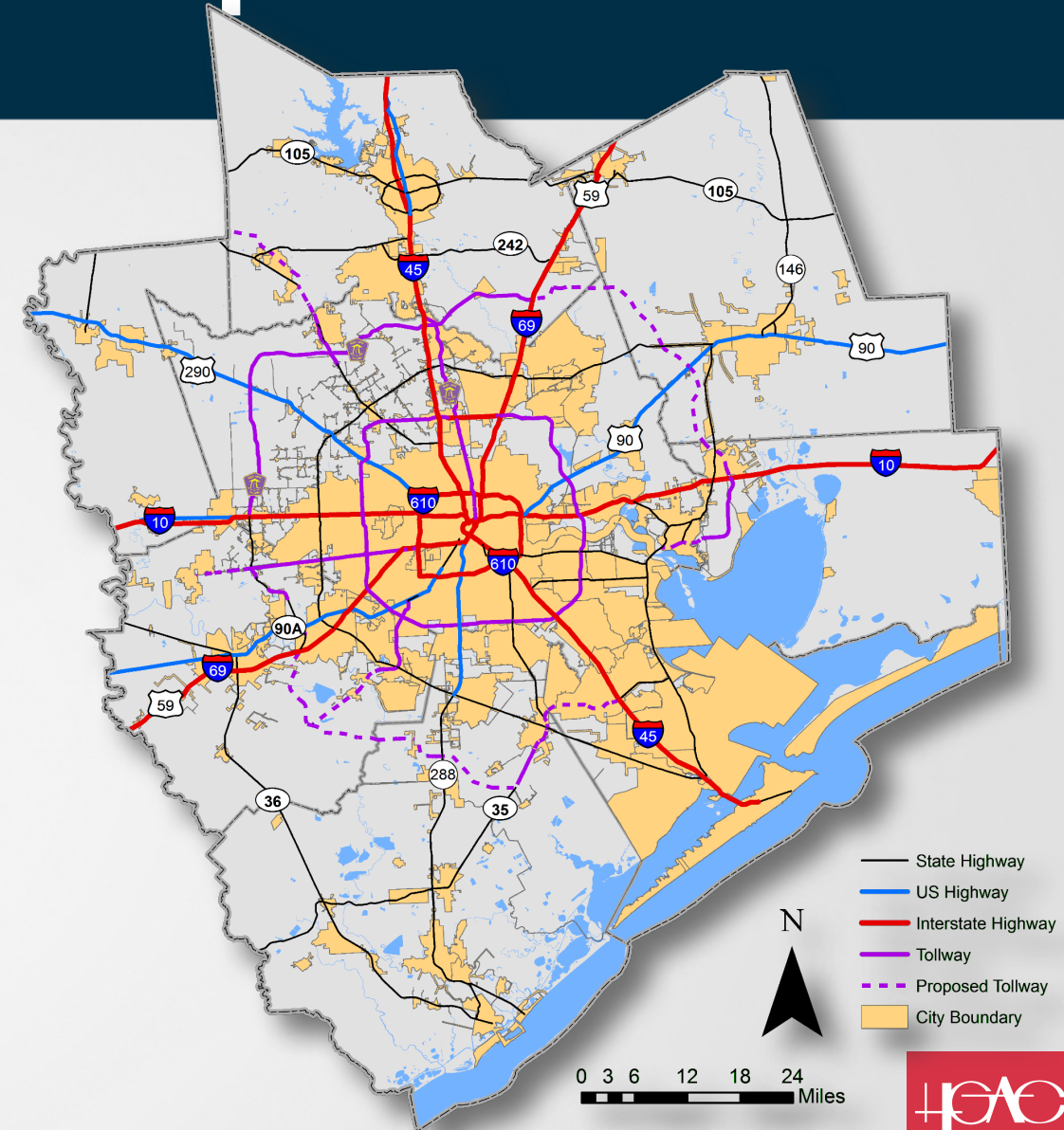


Alan Rodenstein
Houston-Galveston Area Council May 7, 2019
For the AMPO 2019 Symposium



Houston–Galveston Metropolitan Planning Region

- Larger than the State of New Jersey
- Three circular freeways/tollways - Grand Parkway 170 miles upon completion
- Many of the fastest growing areas are unincorporated

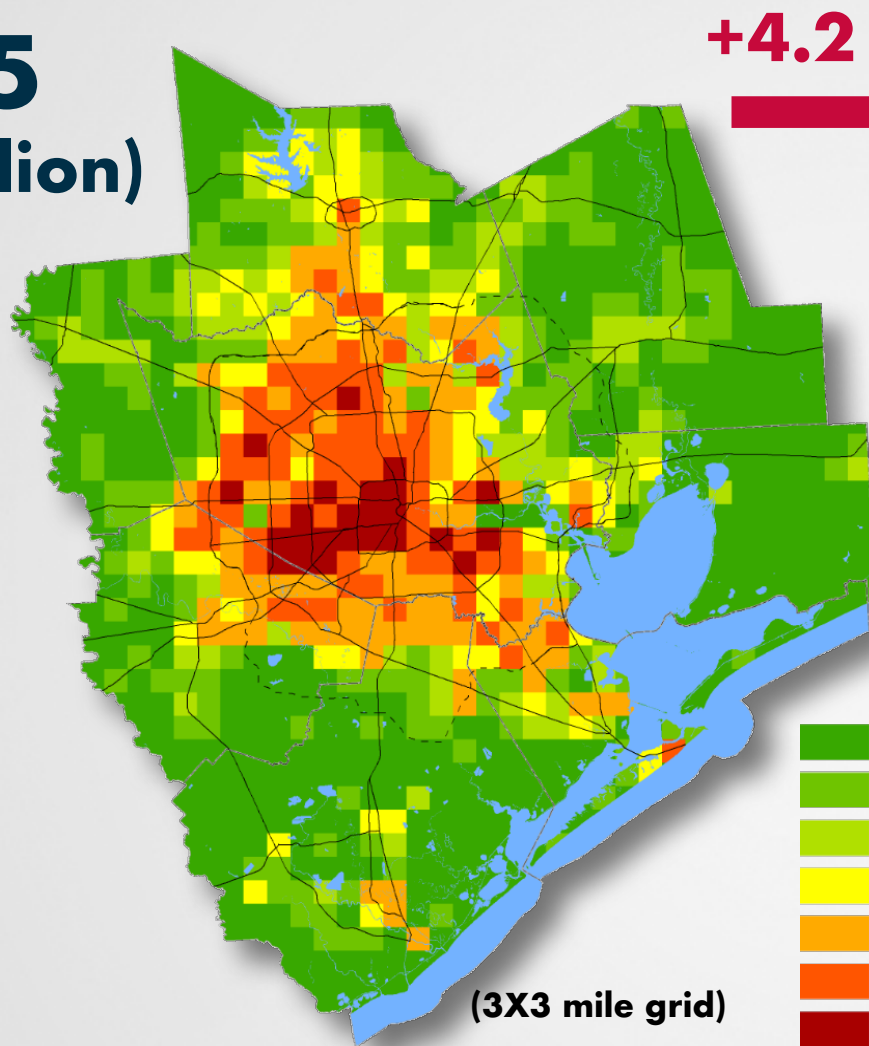


Regional Snapshot

- 6.5 million people in 2015 – 11 million in 2045
- 3.2 million jobs in 2015 – 4.8 million in 2045
- Houston is the 4th Largest city in America
- Large region becoming more populous and dispersed
- Expected 2045 traffic congestion to be dire – it really needs more transit!

2015/2045 Household Population

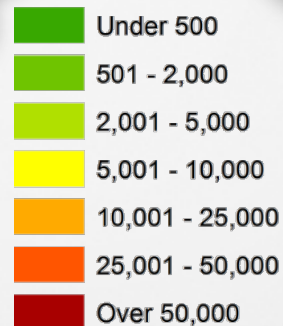
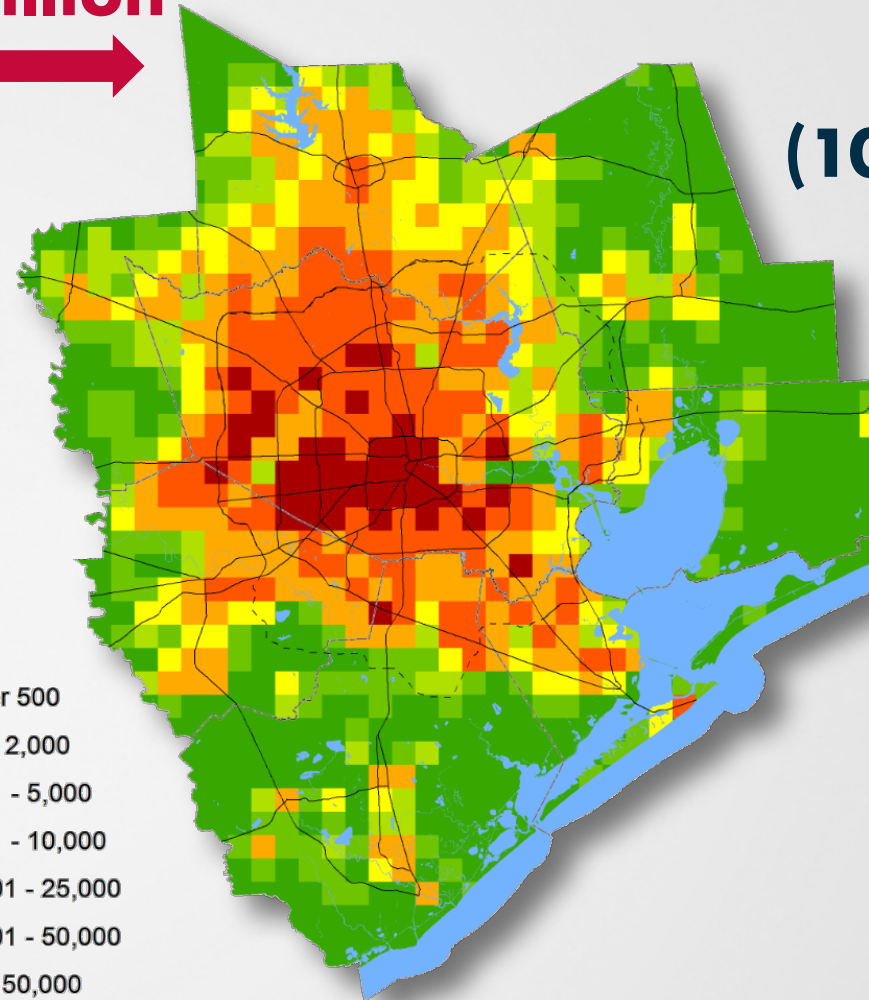
2015
(6.54 Million)



+4.2 Million



2045
(10.76 Million)



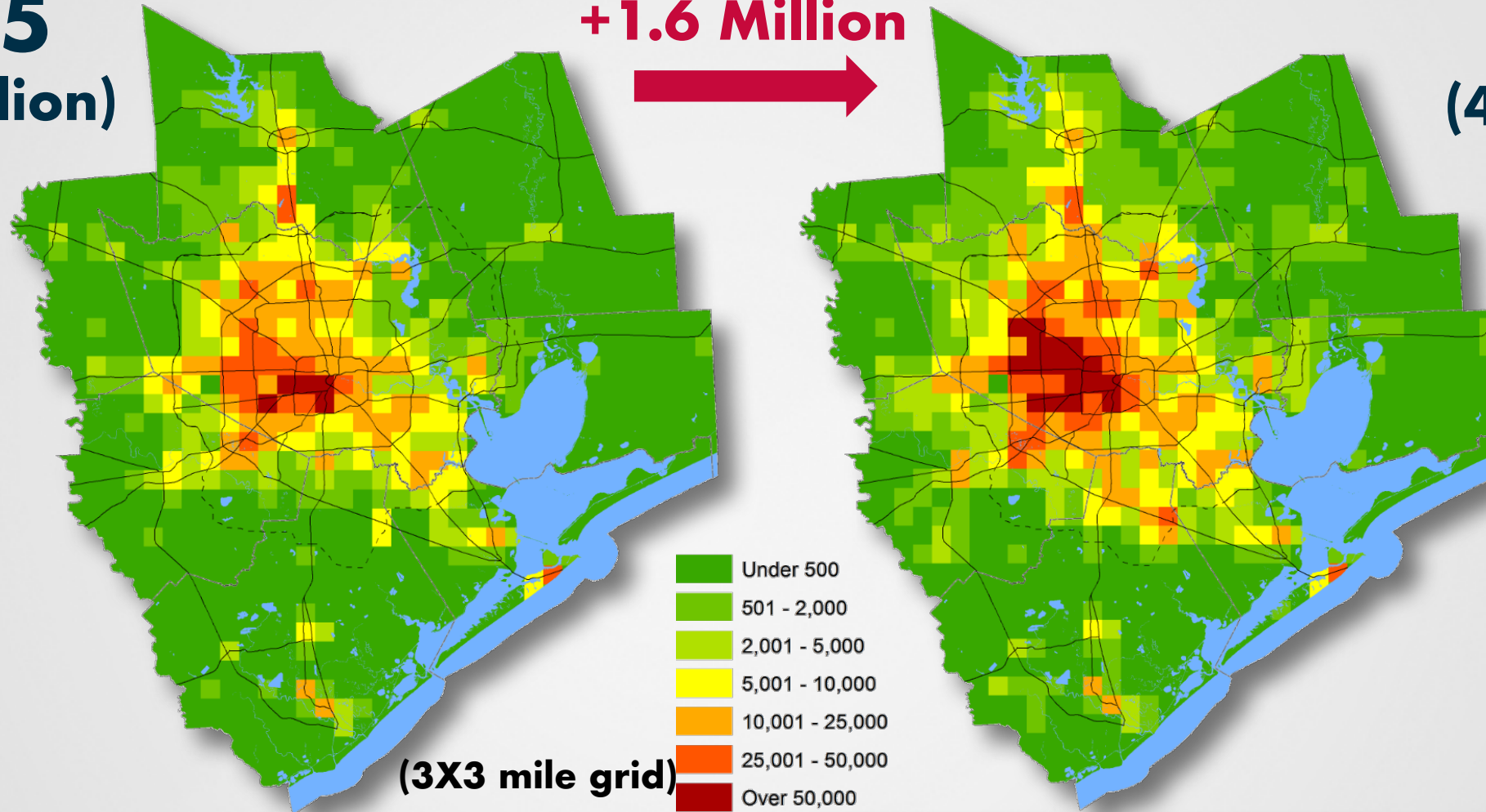
2015/2045 Employment

2015
(3.2 Million)

+1.6 Million

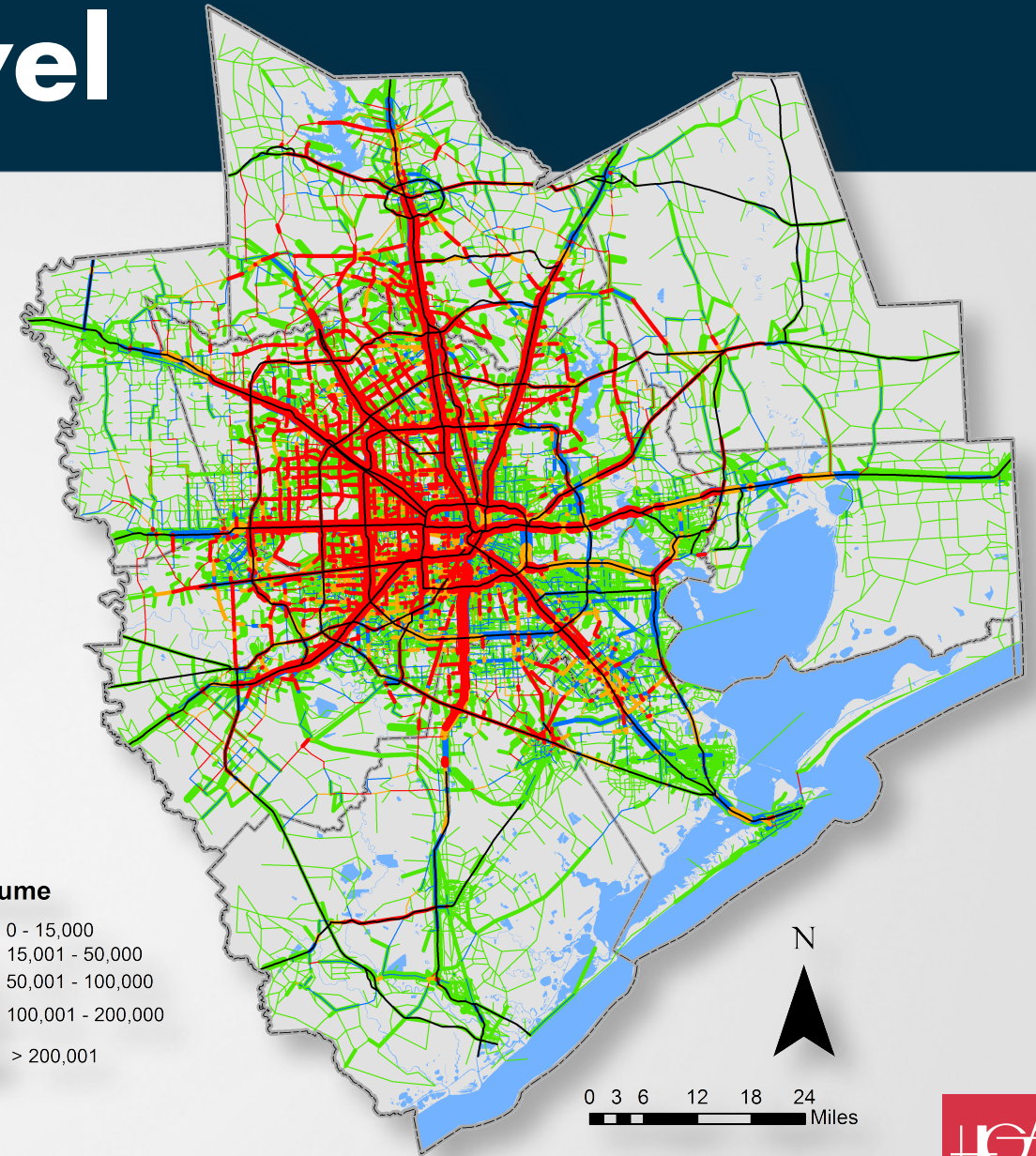
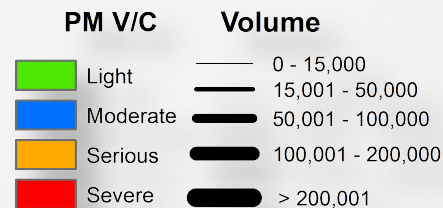


2045
(4.8 Million)



2045 Projected Travel











2045 Congestion

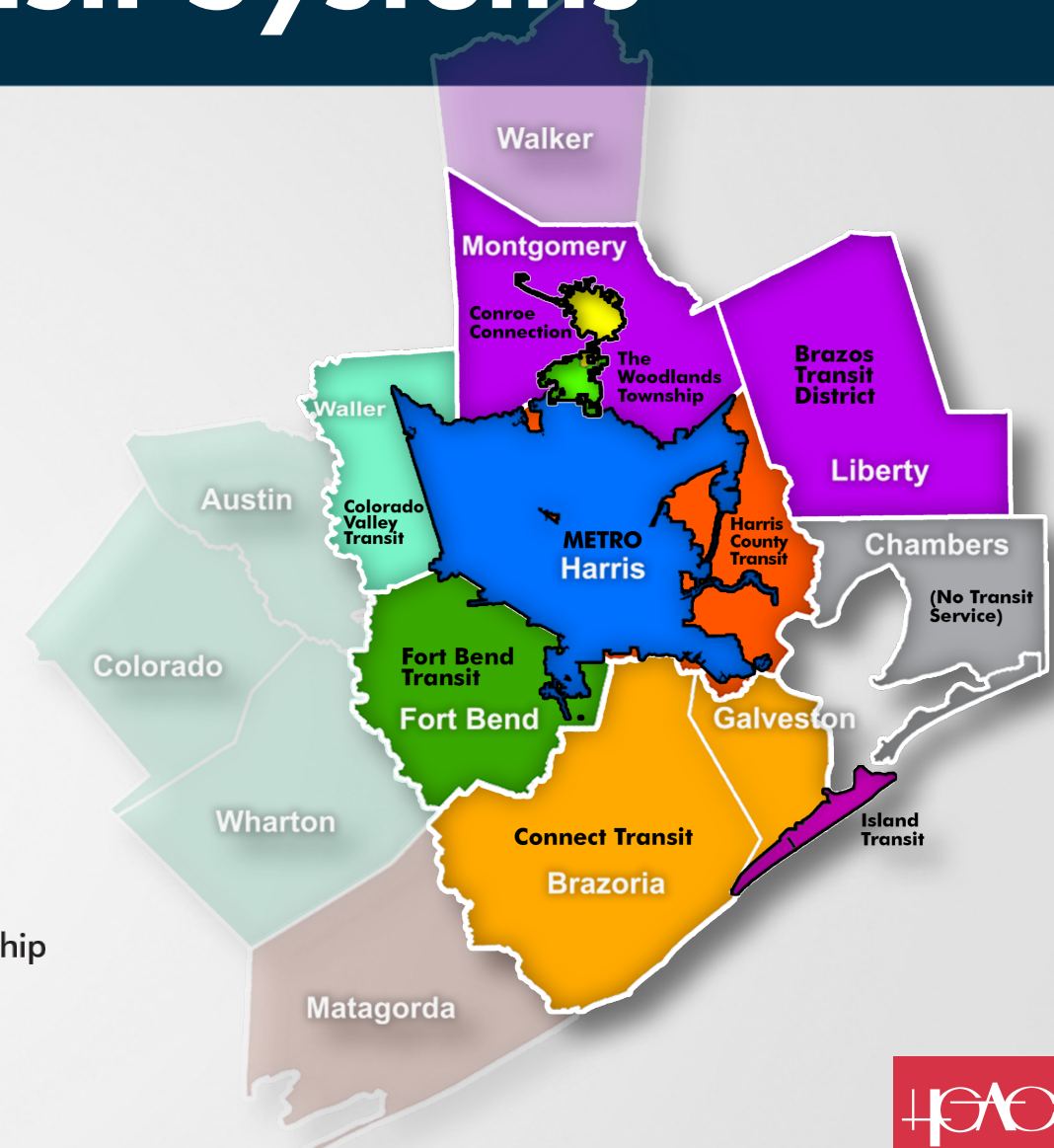


METRO & Regional Transit Systems

- 9 total transit providers
- 6 now provide Commuter Bus/Park and Ride
- Regional Transit is non-METRO

REGIONAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS

 Brazos Transit District	 Conroe Connection
 Colorado Valley Transit	 Harris County Transit
 Connect Transit	 METRO
 Fort Bend Transit	 The Woodlands Township
 No Transit Service	 Island Transit



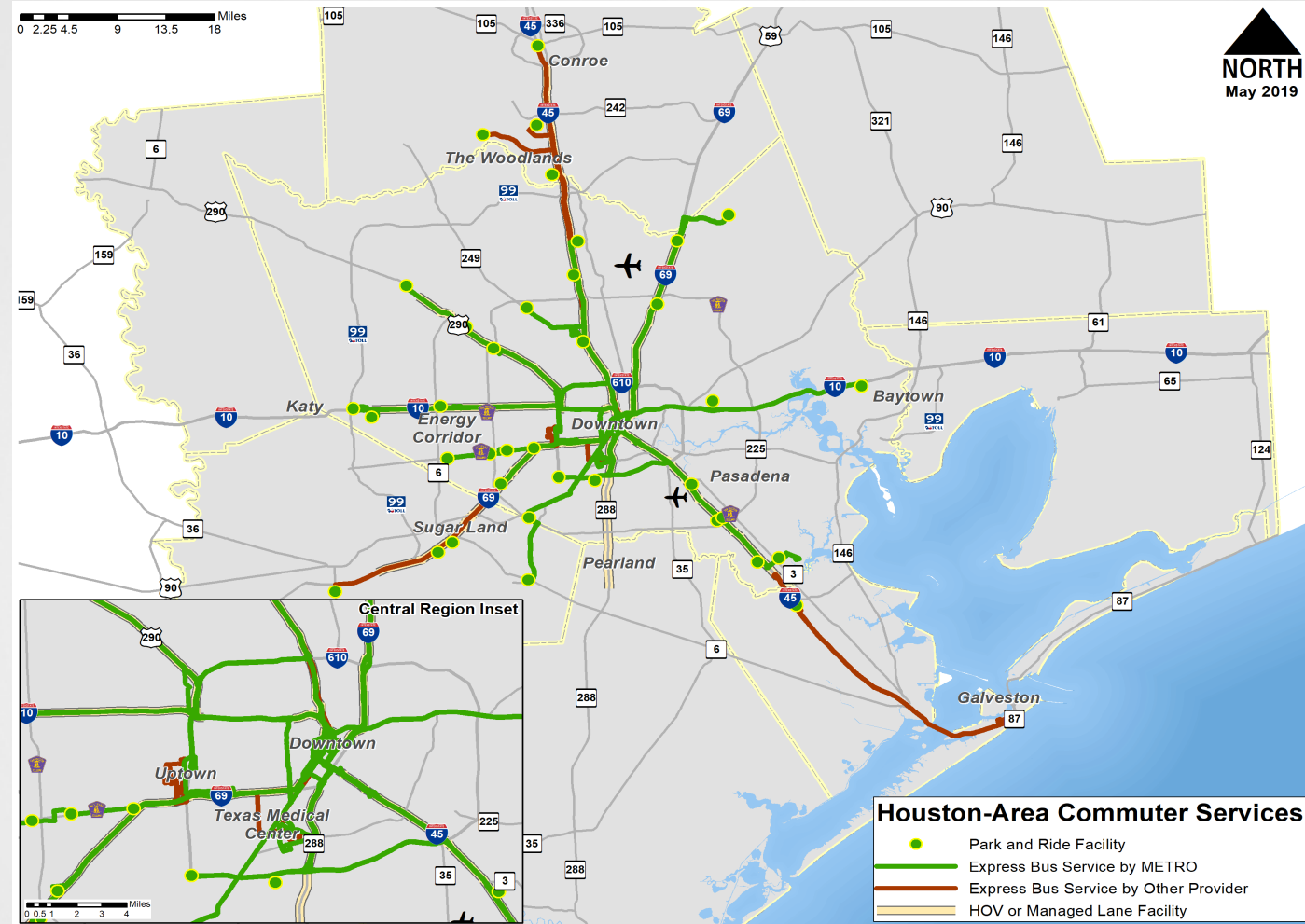
Commuter Bus Service

- Flexible transit mode at relatively low cost
- In Houston, commuter bus benefits by extensive barrier separated HOV/HOT network
- Best for areas of moderate suburban demand
- Works as interim fix for high suburban demand
- Viewed positively by non-dependent riders

Houston's Commuter Bus Service

- Started with advent of Houston METRO (1978)
- Expanded rapidly in 1980's and 1990's
- Regional transit service grew from 2000 to 2013
- More distant areas served by regional providers
- Migration of large employers to suburban job centers

Commuter Bus Service in the Region



CMAQ and Commuter Bus

- H-GAC served as “Local Government” with pilot programs since 1999
- Heavily used for regional commuter bus service last 15 years
- As a Non Attainment area needs to reduce NOx emissions
- Looks for long term sustainability

Key Problems Recently

- Regional population growing rapidly and outward
- Little or no commuter bus expansion in fastest growing area(s)
- No source of dedicated local funding for any regional transit services
- Region falling further behind in transit commuter share
- Implementing projects and generating applications

Problem Approach

- Work closely with transit agencies and municipalities
- Develop forward looking concepts in CMAQ Request for Applications
- Increase revenue – Advanced Funding Agreements
- Intensive outreach and preapplication meetings
- Once application received and approved - partner closely with transit provider

Collaboration and Innovation

- Provider situations are different
- Most involve CMAQ funding
- All involve coordination with H-GAC and transit providers
- Many are innovative and all meet regional needs
- Emphasis on more distant transit services

Results

- **Conroe – Implemented April 1** with innovative **Intergovernmental Agreement with METRO**
- **The Woodlands – Energy Corridor** – Suburb to suburb service (tentative July 8)
- **Pearland** – Private **for profit** commuter transit service (tentative July 8)
- **Fort Bend County** – Service to Downtown Houston (late 2019/early 2020)

1 Conroe – Implementing Distant Service with a METRO Partnership

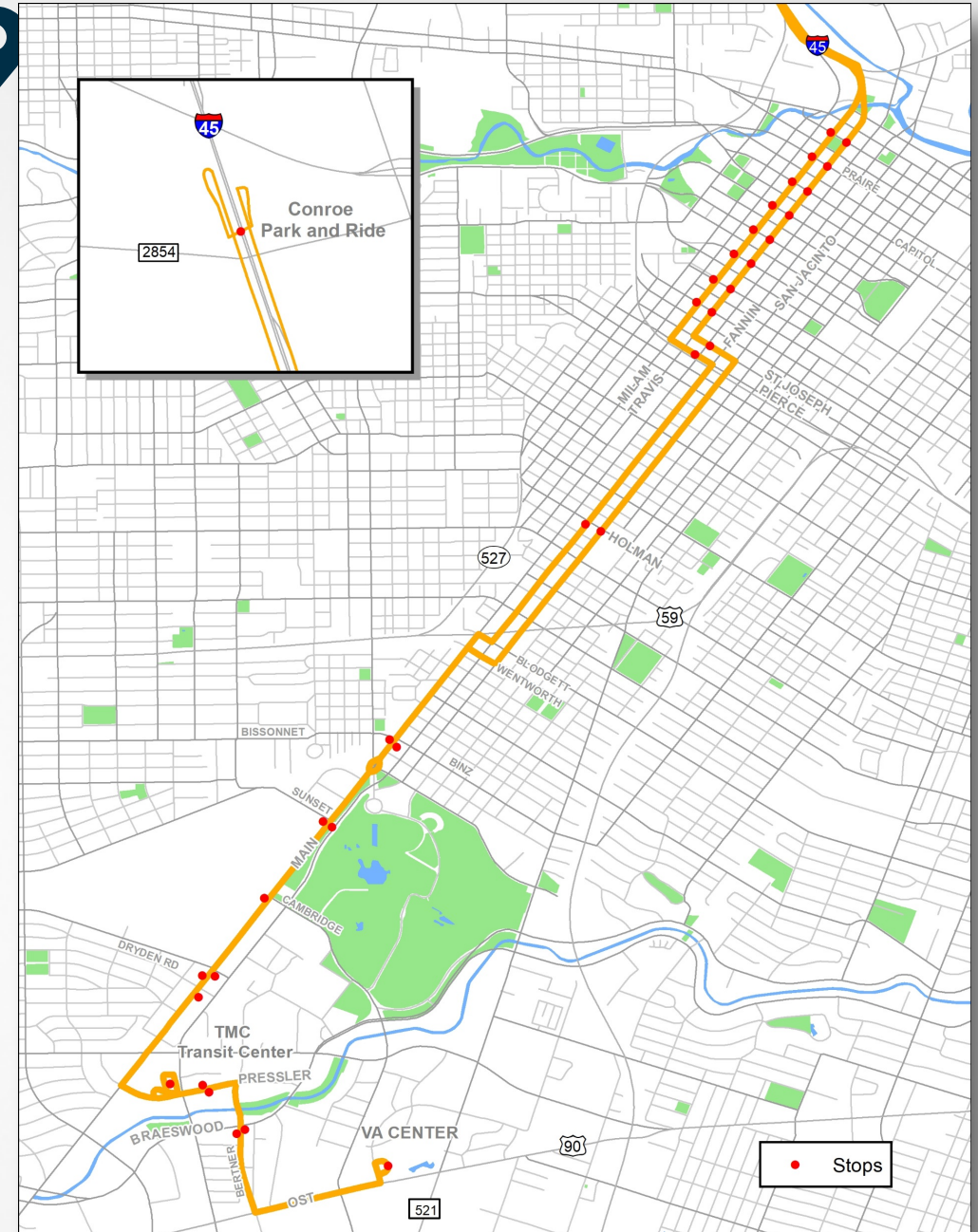
- Conroe city over 100K
- City has small fixed route/ADA service
- Unable to find commuter service provider
- METRO 1st time contracting with Conroe as service provider
- Succeeded in implementing northernmost service - 46 miles

The 1st Conroe Bus Going Into Revenue Service



Conroe – April 1 2019

- Service has grown steadily in first month of service.
- Map shows Downtown Houston and Texas Medical Center Service.
- Park and Ride actually under IH-45



#2 – The Woodlands – Energy Corridor

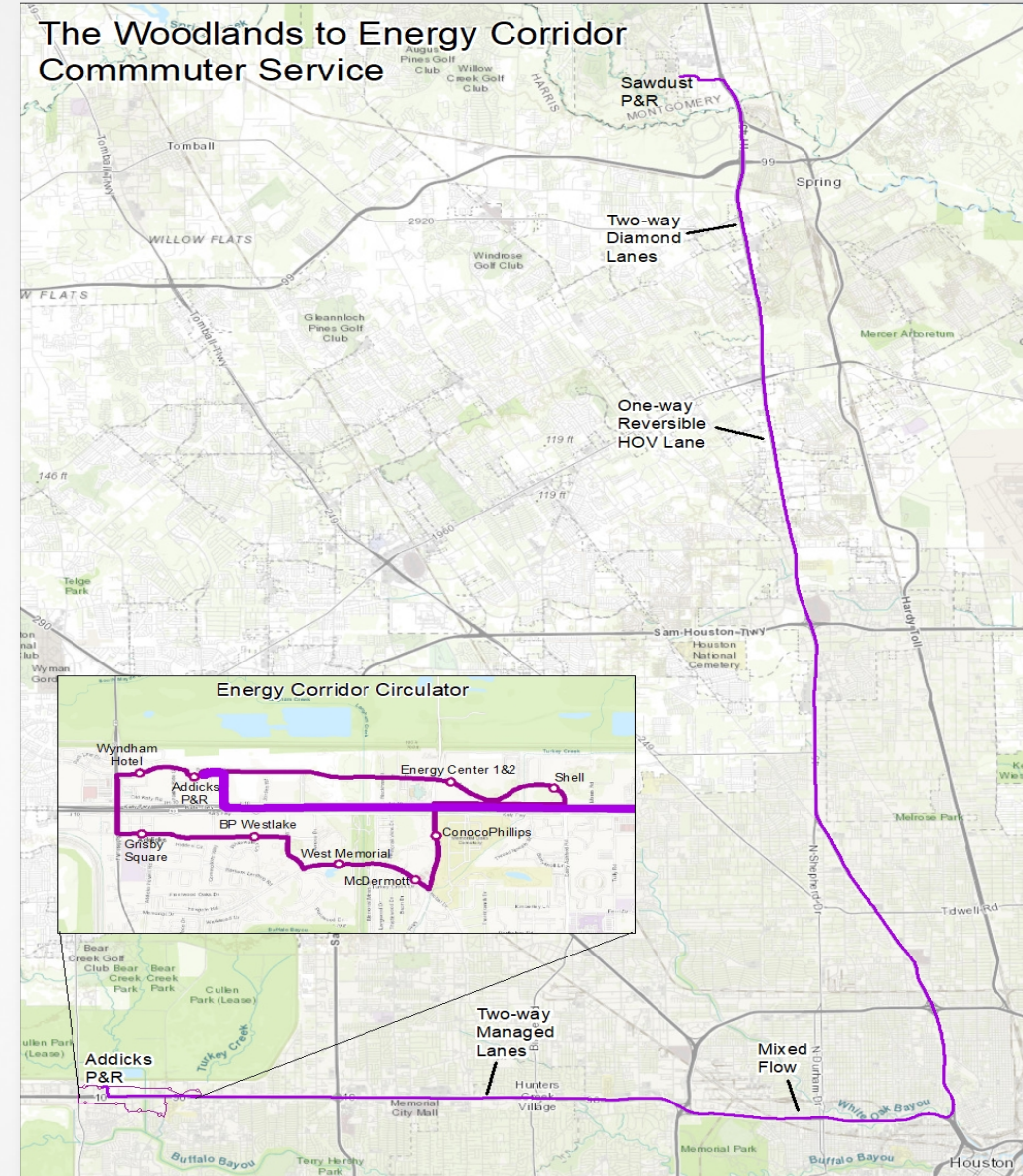
- The first suburb to suburb service in region
- Energy Corridor District (ECD) has 85K employees
- Shell, Conoco, BP and other large employers located in ECD
- Multiple surveys showed consistently high transit demand for
- 50 mile trip
- Route used is protected (HOV lanes) from general traffic

Existing Woodlands Express Coach



The Woodlands – July 2019

- Actually longer route than Conroe with Energy Corridor Circulator (55 miles)
- Route chosen to stay out of mixed traffic and minimize travel time



3 – Pearland Park and Ride

- 20 plus years struggle of establishing commuter service in rapidly growing suburban city
- Need for commuter service is undisputed
- Financial issues have been challenging
- Pearland/Kerrville Bus originally applied for CMAQ grant
- Later decided to implement without federal participation

Can This Really Work?

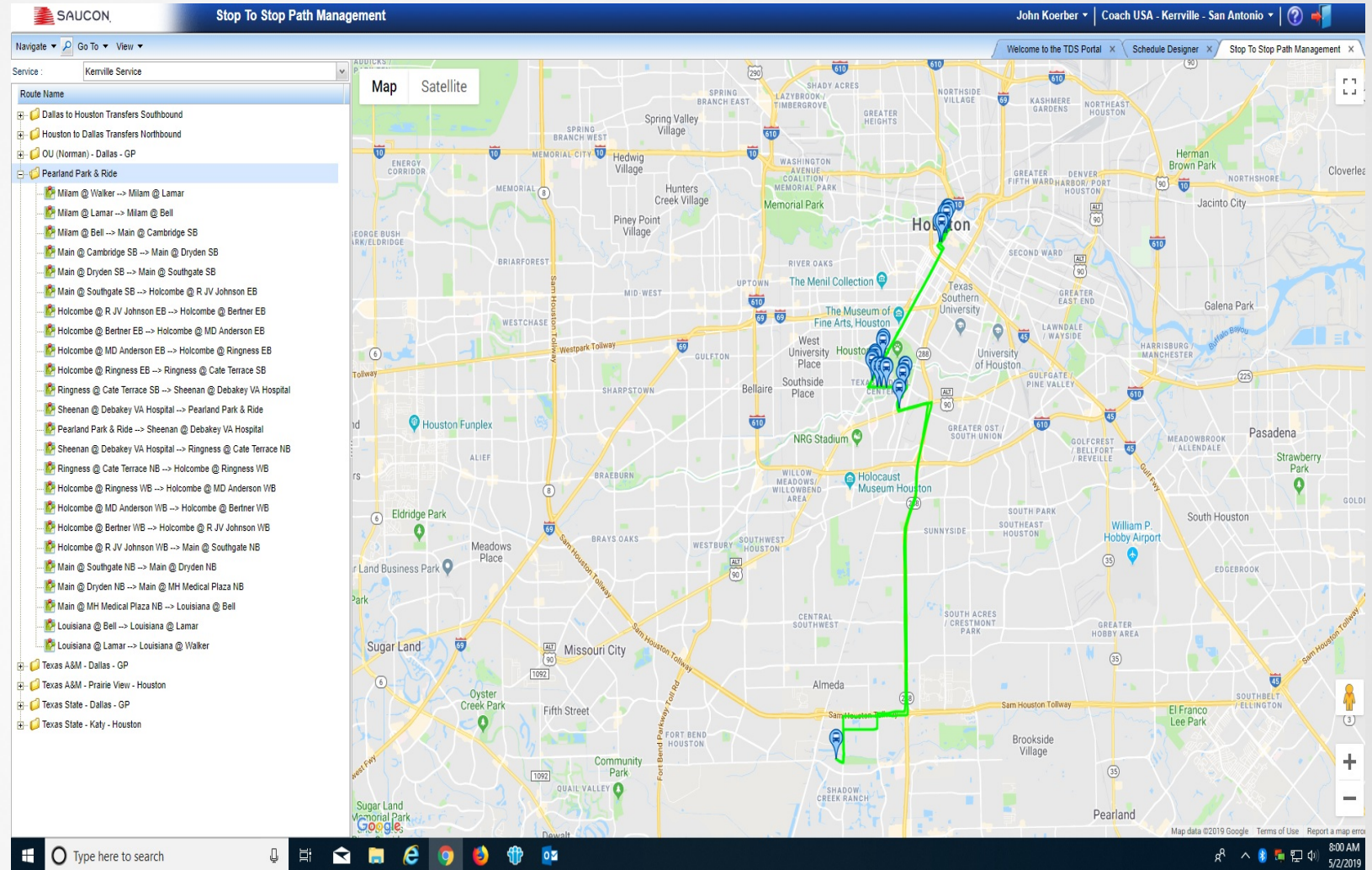
- Pearland is close to the Texas Medical Center and Downtown
- Daily parking rates are very high at both destinations
- Toll lanes on TX-288 are being added
- Demand for service is very high according to multiple studies
- The \$6.50 one-way fare may yield a positive return on equity

Kerrville Coach Bus



Pearland – July 8, 2019

- Destination in Texas Medical Center and Downtown Houston shown
- Can a convergence of factors result in a profitable venture?



#4 - Fort Bend Transit Commuter Service

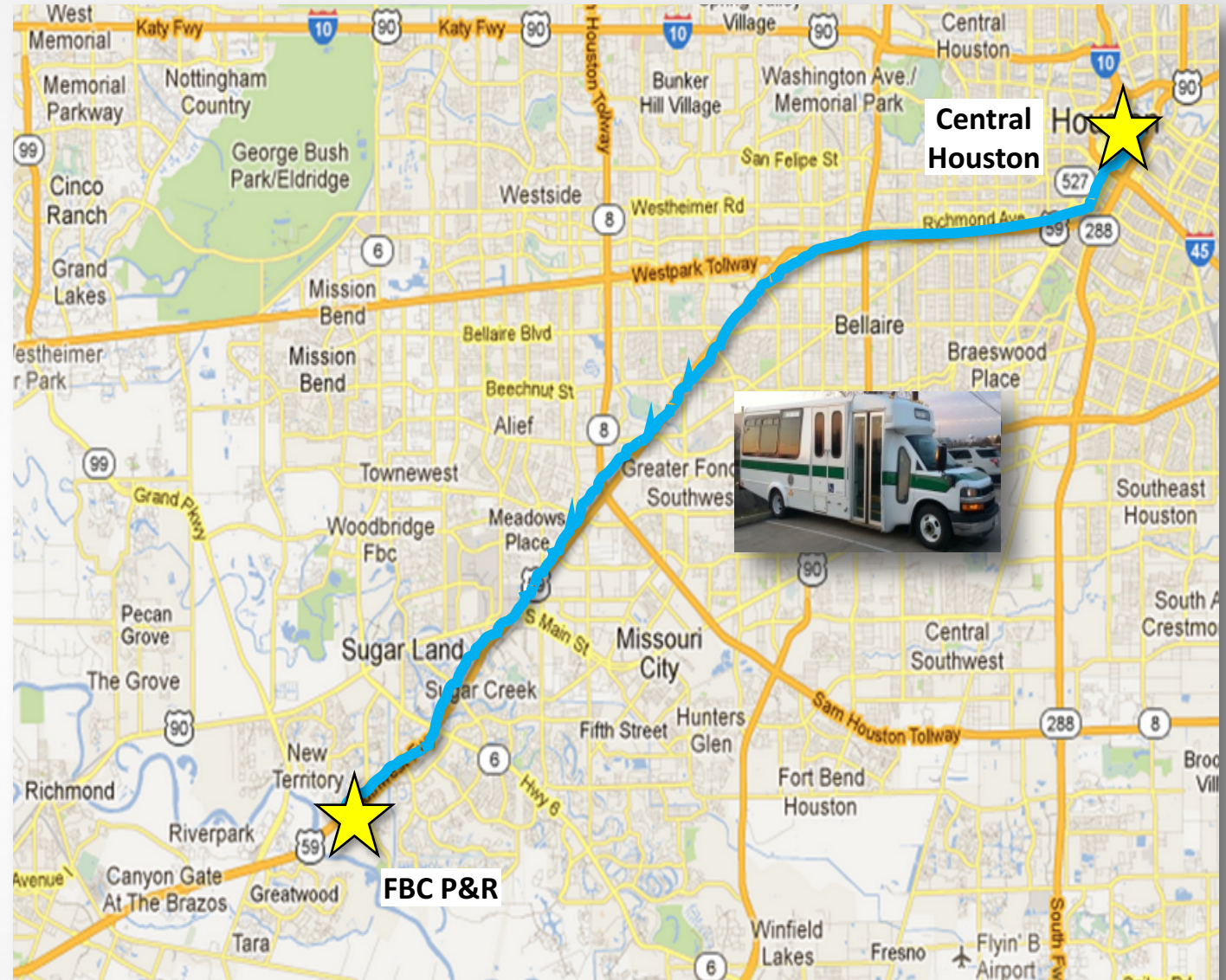
- Fort Bend County is the largest suburban county (750K) in the region
- No current service to Downtown Houston
- Service start awaiting completion of new transit facility and receipt of new vehicles
- Likely implementation is early 2020

Existing Fort Bend Commuter Bus



Fort Bend – Early 2020

- Fort Bend Service may start even in late 2019 from University of Houston – Sugar Land to Downtown Houston
- Strong demand from largest suburban county to Downtown Houston



Next Steps in Commuter Transit

- Working with Springwoods Village – Exxon Mobil consolidated campus
- Commuter transit services in: Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller Counties
- Expansion of Recent Services
- Commuter transit is a step towards reducing congestion

Questions?

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