

GOAL 3.1:

A multi-modal transportation system that integrates Bellaire with the region and enhances the mobility and safety of residents within their own community.

Guiding Principles

- A. *Ensure neighborhood integrity and the safety of adults and kids.*
- B. *Minimize traffic congestion and maximize the safety and efficiency of existing and new infrastructure for moving people and goods within and through Bellaire.*
- C. *Make transportation improvements that promote desired commercial development and redevelopment.*
- D. *Emphasize “context sensitive design” for all forms of mobility improvements.*
- E. *Support transit services and investments that are mutually beneficial to the region and to Bellaire.*
- F. *Promote investments and mobility choices that reduce vehicle trips in the City and region and support area-wide air quality goals.*

Consideration 1: Citizen Involvement in Planning

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure that citizens are involved in defining the objectives of mobility projects and services and providing input on their design and execution. This is especially important for projects that may have very localized impacts on nearby residents, businesses, and/or schools.
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue to require Traffic Impact Analyses (TIA) for significant new development and redevelopment projects when this information will help to clarify anticipated neighborhood impacts and indicate potential mitigation measures.
Capital Improvement	n/a
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Take advantage of opportunities to educate residents about rights-of-way, particularly the area beyond the paved street section that is also reserved for public uses (i.e., utilities, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.).
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Coordinate with METRO, H-GAC, Harris County, TxDOT and other agencies, as needed, to ensure opportunities for direct input by Bellaire officials, residents, and businesses early in the process of planning new mobility facilities and services.
Further Study/ Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explore further specific criteria that would have to be addressed by citizen proposals for street closures or traffic calming measures on local neighborhood streets. ▶ Explore the efficacy of possibly reducing speed limits on local residential streets, accompanied by strict and regular enforcement, as a preferred strategy versus street closures and physical calming devices.

Consideration 2: Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pursue opportunities to upgrade certain streets to “exceptional pedestrian and bicycle environments” while still accommodating other transportation modes.
Regulation	n/a
Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Redesign designated streets to emphasize pedestrian and bicycle movement and amenities (e.g., narrower or fewer traffic lanes, wider sidewalks and/or walking/jogging paths, lighting, benches, pedestrian shelters, street trees, landscaping, etc.). Coordinate these improvements with Safe Routes to Schools efforts. ▶ Install bicycle racks at key locations and buildings throughout the community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prioritize intersections in the community that are heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists and implement safety improvements at intersections with the greatest safety concerns (e.g., marked, signed, and/or signaled pedestrian crossings; pedestrian-actuated signal detectors, bikeway signage).
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Begin the phased implementation of a City-wide pedestrian and bicycle network to connect neighborhoods with parks, schools, other public facilities, transit services, and the City Center and other activity centers and destinations. ▶ Maintain a community-wide sidewalk inventory to highlight gaps in the existing sidewalk system, areas with no sidewalks at all, areas where sidewalks are in need of repair or replacement, and areas with the most substantial pedestrian activity where sidewalks are most needed. ▶ Continue to enhance the City-wide sidewalk network through the City’s ongoing street reconstruction program.
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue to explore, with the City of Houston and Harris County, options for linking the Newcastle Trail to the Brays Bayou trail system. ▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston and the City of West University Place to implement sidewalk connections at the Bissonnet and Bellaire Boulevard crossings of the railroad corridor along Bellaire’s east City limits.
Further Study/ Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explore, with TxDOT, potential enhancements to the West Loop 610 underpasses at Fournace, Bissonnet, Bellaire Boulevard, and Evergreen to respond to citizen desires for more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly links between east and west Bellaire and to the City Center area.
Consideration 3: School Area Safety	
Policy	n/a
Regulation	n/a
Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prepare for future TxDOT Calls for Projects for the Texas Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program to secure external funding support for safety-related improvements.
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review existing safe school routes to ensure their adequacy and consistency and identify any improvement needs. Also promote specific routes as preferred so improvements and safety measures may be targeted appropriately.
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue coordination with HISD and private schools in Bellaire to ensure the safety of students and parents on foot and on bikes, manage bus traffic and vehicle queuing associated with peak-hour drop-off and pick-up activity (e.g., S. Rice afternoon situation at Bellaire High School), and to control on-street and overflow parking in campus areas (e.g., Post Oak School).
Further Study/ Planning	n/a
Consideration 4: Improvements to Key Corridors	
Policy	n/a
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Determine the need for more stringent access management policies and standards for new development and redeveloping sites to reduce conflict points, maintain traffic capacity, and enhance safety along the City’s major commercial corridors (e.g., Bissonnet)—and especially in the City Center area. ▶ Correct the alignment of driveways with median openings as redevelopment of individual sites occurs.

Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Install esplanades in place of continuous center turning lanes (e.g., on Bissonnet, South Rice) to control turning movements and increase safety, provide an intermediate refuge area for pedestrians crossing major streets, and enhance corridor aesthetics through landscaping of the new esplanades.
Program/ Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evaluate traffic flow requirements for all modes and develop an implementation plan for improvements on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) <i>Bellaire Boulevard (between S. Rice Avenue and Chimney Rock)</i>: the proximity of the METRO Transit Center to the S. Rice intersection creates challenges for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. (2) <i>South Rice Avenue (between Elm and Beechnut) and Chimney Rock Road (between Evergreen and Maple)</i>: consider improved intersection control, wider sidewalks, potential median installation, parking and bicycle accommodations, and streetscape enhancements.
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston, METRO, and other entities as appropriate regarding the specific improvements cited under Program/Initiative. ▶ Pursue, with neighboring cities and other involved agencies, opportunities for constructing grade separations where Bellaire Boulevard and Bissonnet cross the railroad corridor along the City's east City limits, as funding is available.
Further Study/ Planning	n/a
Consideration 5: Special Area Planning	
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promote the City Center and Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) areas as key destinations in Bellaire particularly suited for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access.
Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Add specific pedestrian and bicycle criteria to the site plan review process for commercial sites in key areas such as City Center and the UV-T area and along major roadways. These criteria may include designation of pedestrian connections to surrounding developments, internal pedestrian and bicycle circulation, bike parking locations, and parking lot safety.
Capital Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pursue east-west street continuity through the UV-T area, between the West Loop and South Rice, to improve access and circulation, support the area's redevelopment potential, and relieve traffic pressure on neighborhoods to the south.
Program/ Initiative	n/a
Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue coordination with the City of Houston, METRO, Uptown Houston, and private property owners in the area just south of Westpark between West Loop 610 and S. Rice Avenue regarding access and east-west street connectivity improvements recommended for the area. ▶ Investigate opportunities to relocate the Bellaire Transit Center from the City Center area to a more favorable location for both the City and METRO.
Further Study/ Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider strategic removal of particular public street segments in the City Center area to support its redevelopment prospects (by creating more attractive site development configurations), reduce the area's automobile orientation in favor of a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly setting, and to reduce the number of awkwardly configured intersections along the Bissonnet corridor. ▶ Complete a traffic access and circulation study of the City Center area that revisits previous concepts for reconfiguring the area street pattern and traffic flows (e.g., alternatives to the diagonal Bissonnet alignment); assesses alternate traffic management strategies linked to potential City Center redevelopment scenarios (e.g., one-way streets, new street cross sections/designs, targeted street abandonment); and considers pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodation and safety.

Consideration 6: Energy Savings and Pollution Reduction	
Policy	▶ Promote bicycling and walking in the design of all new transportation projects as these are the quietest, cleanest, and most energy efficient transportation modes.
Regulation	n/a
Capital Improvement	▶ Upgrade the City’s vehicle fleet to hybrid technology vehicles, as practical and cost effective, to reduce the pollution and cost impacts of gasoline and diesel powered vehicles.
Program/ Initiative	▶ Conduct regular reviews of City-maintained traffic signals and update signal timing as appropriate to reduce fuel consumption and pollution from improperly timed signals. Also evaluate low-volume intersections where potential signal removal may be warranted.
Partnerships/ Coordination	▶ Expand the City’s current effort to update traffic signal controls to advanced technology for improved performance and better traffic flow, especially in response to varying traffic volumes and conditions (initial focus on Bellaire and Bissonnet, with funding from H-GAC).
Further Study/ Planning	n/a
Consideration 7: Emergency Planning	
Policy	▶ Conduct emergency planning for the City – and encourage complementary private sector planning – to provide for movement to and from emergency and health care facilities.
Regulation	n/a
Capital Improvement	n/a
Program/ Initiative	▶ Develop a multi-modal emergency transportation plan to ensure continued mobility and effective evacuation under a variety of natural and man-made catastrophe scenarios. The plan should consider the possible scarcity of energy and fuel and potential disruption to infrastructure and rights-of-way.
Partnerships/ Coordination	▶ Coordinate with the City of Houston, METRO, Harris County, H-GAC, TxDOT, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and other appropriate entities on local and regional emergency planning.
Further Study/ Planning	n/a
Consideration 8: Coordination on Regional Projects	
Policy	▶ Establish formal agreements and ensure clear and concise processes to achieve successful outcomes on joint projects with other public agencies.
Regulation	n/a
Capital Improvement	n/a
Program/ Initiative	<p>▶ Pursue planning and improved coordination with TxDOT, H-GAC, and the City of Houston to increase safety conditions and decrease traffic incidents on West Loop 610. In addition to making roadways safer for the community, this would help to reduce the inordinate financial and logistical burden of frequent calls for Bellaire EMS and police response along this heavily traveled freeway corridor.</p> <p>▶ Conduct an origin/destination study to improve understanding of traffic flows within and through Bellaire.</p>

Partnerships/ Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review existing TxDOT maintenance agreements and propose revisions as necessary. ▶ Pursue formal agreements with METRO regarding any potential transit routes in Bellaire—and any that would involve potential joint use of City rights-of-way—as well as to govern public improvements and other considerations related to any potential future light rail or other enhanced transit construction along Westpark. ▶ Continue to explore, with the City of Houston and Harris County, options for linking the Newcastle Trail to the Brays Bayou trail system.
Further Study/ Planning	n/a