

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Tuesday, August 31, 2021  
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## **Texas Transportation Commission unanimously passes the 2022 Unified Transportation Plan despite being slammed by Houstonians who oppose the current NHHIP**

(HOUSTON, TX) On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) unanimously approved its 2022 Unified Transportation Program (UTP), which includes the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) proposal for the NHHIP (North Houston Highway Improvement Project). It is Stop TxDOT I-45's position that no such approval can be considered ethical when community voices have been intentionally excluded and ignored. Stop TxDOT I-45 continues to advocate that these funds be used for a re-envisioned project, one which incorporates feedback from impacted communities and local governments.

We strongly denounce the claim that the recent Survey Monkey poll is a true demonstration of public engagement. The survey was poorly distributed among impacted communities, an issue that was exacerbated by the survey's online-only format. Additionally, the inclusion of a citizenship question was an intimidation tactic intended to dissuade affected community members from responding. This, in combination with the Greater Houston Partnership's purchase of over \$10,000.00 in misleading ads, amounts to a survey that does not reflect the will of affected communities.

When the preliminary results from the survey were presented, [they were displayed with three response options](#): support/maintain project and funding, support removing project/funding, and support maintaining project funding but not for the project as proposed. These do not match the [options presented in the Survey Monkey poll](#); this is absolutely an intentional misrepresentation of data. They neglected to publish any data relating to one of the questions on the survey: do you stand to benefit monetarily in any way from the project? We await TxDOT's release of the full data associated with the Survey Monkey poll, and will request to see how many responses resulted either from the GHP's paid ads and from the employees of firms that stand to profit from this expansion.

The commissioners made a show of describing the millions of dollars they have committed to mitigation efforts for the most severe impacts of the project, including \$27 million for affordable housing. Without context, these numbers are meaningless: while \$27 million is an improvement over their original commitments, it still falls short of what would actually be needed to provide adequate and timely replacement housing for the residents that this project will displace.

Please note: of the elected officials from the Houston area who gave comments, none represent districts that are within the proposed footprint. Elected officials capitalized on the fear of the moment from Hurricane Ida as a reason to expand the freeway. In reality, adding a few lanes will do nothing to seriously impact the efficiency with which people can evacuate in single-occupancy vehicles. In contrast, each car lane that we rebuild for mass transit will see a 10-fold increase in capacity for people. The proposed expansion will simply move the bottleneck further north.

The solution to evacuation is coordinated emergency planning, high-capacity mass transit, and smart delivery of emergency messages.

We remind the public that Tuesday's hearing did not fairly represent the opposition to the NHHIP's current design because most impacted residents are unable to travel over 150 miles to attend the TTC meeting in person in Austin on a work day. Additionally, many people who stand to be most impacted by this project hail from communities most vulnerable to COVID-19 infection rates and which lack equitable access to vaccinations and healthcare. None of the elected officials who gave comments supporting the project represent an area affected by any part of the NHHIP; their constituents will not bear the brunt of the impacts. These multiple barriers represent the deep inequities within this process that keep those who are most impacted from voicing their concerns.

Widening highways does not improve congestion or safety. The TTC and TxDOT must focus on a future that keeps everyone safe and invest in infrastructure that improves affordable transportation options like walking, biking, and public transit, which will reduce our reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and improve our region's safety and mobility options. Additionally, spending eight billion dollars to widen a highway will further exacerbate impacts of climate change on a region that regularly floods and experiences increased hurricanes and extreme temperatures.

For more community voices and elected officials speaking out against the NHHIP as currently designed, please [view our August 7 rally](#) hosted by James Franklin McIngvale, "Mattress Mack" at Gallery Furniture.

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Stop TxDOT I-45 is a grassroots organization opposed to TxDOT's plans to expand the right-of-way of the North Houston Highway Improvement Project. We object to the plans because we value environmental justice, equity, and historic preservation. A few months ago, we were just individuals living across Houston. Now we are standing together, and we know it's not too late to save our city.

[www.stoptxdoti45.com](http://www.stoptxdoti45.com)