

April 26, 2020

Ms. Laura Ryan

TxDOT Commissioner

RE: NHHIP – I45

Dear Commissioner Ryan:

Thank you for your extensive participation in the oversight of the proposed North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP).

Over the years, we have heard from concerned residents and organizations in our district about this project. The proposed NHHIP project is of significant importance to this region and will have significant impacts on the adjacent communities, especially those that are abutting the subject project, and on our region as a whole with respect to flood control and air quality.

We continue to monitor the work of the City of Houston's Planning Department, including the community engagement process the City initiated one year ago. We attended meetings conducted in our respective districts and were impressed at the unprecedented levels of community participation. We thank TxDOT and its personnel for its attendance at these meetings, and for TxDOT's participation in Mayor Turner's evaluation process.

We understand the City of Houston, based on feedback from residents living adjacent to the highway, developed a vision that would significantly improve the IH-45 corridor while keeping the infrastructure within its current footprint. The guiding principles are contained in "Vision C", and its basic principles are articulated in the attached document from the City of Houston's Planning Department on April 13. We believe that this new alternative, whose details are still being refined, offers the best path forward for the Houston region. We support an alternative that conclusively delivers these improvements to communities who live along the entirety of the project:

- Allows residents and businesses to remain in place by minimizing displacement;
- Protects historical and cultural sites identified by community residents;
- Erects two direction transit lanes;
- Installs BRT Stations along the route of I-45;
- Brings IH-45 North up to current safety design standards;
- Designs two-lane frontage roads as city streets;
- Improves drainage on Little White Oak and Halls Bayous;
- Substantially mitigates flooding in Independence Heights;
- Saves costs to taxpayers; and
- Improves bicycle and pedestrian safety, especially at crossings over and under I-45.

As many of us communicated to TxDOT in our letter of August 18, 2017, in subsequent communications, and in our endorsement of the Make I-45 Better Coalition's comment letter on TxDOT's Draft Environmental Impact Statement, many more details require resolution before this project should proceed. These considerations include:

- Details on intersection designs where feeder roads cross city streets to ensure safety for all road users;
- Areas and exact locations where sound barriers should be installed;
- Impacts on public parks and greenways, especially the greenway along White Oak Bayou;
- Air quality mitigation measures at the many schools which are close to I-45;
- Measures to ensure that water quality from highway trash and debris do not pollute Houston's bayous and storm water systems.

We thank you for your personal involvement in moving the NHHIP in a more positive direction. We strongly believe that if this project is to proceed, a new vision that remains within the footprint of the existing highway will be dramatically better for our current constituents and the future of the region. We stand ready to work with you and others at TxDOT to continue to improve this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Tarla Cisneros*