



LINA HIDALGO

October 12, 2020

Commissioner Laura Ryan
Texas Transportation Commissioner
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Commissioner Ryan,

I write to request that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) extend the comment period from 30 to 120 days for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP).

This is a very important moment for our agencies and our community. Once the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issues a Record of Decision, TxDOT will be able to proceed with final design, property acquisition, and construction of the NHHIP. Over the past year I have consistently heard from concerned residents and organizations about the importance of this project to the region and the impacts it will have on the people of Harris County, with the most significant impacts felt by low-income residents and communities of color living adjacent to the proposed project. Harris County, along with the City of Houston, Metro, and others, are working to respect and represent those voices in advocating for a better project that improves quality of life for everyone and protects our most vulnerable communities. On June 9, Harris County Commissioners Court passed a resolution calling on TxDOT to look at alternative design configurations for the NHHIP Segments 1 and 2, and Harris County is currently engaged in developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TxDOT, the City of Houston, and METRO to ensure that this gets done.

At over 8,000 pages across three volumes, the FEIS is not only long but also highly technical. The minimum required 30 days is not sufficient time for Harris County, our partners, and—most importantly—the many impacted community members, to engage with the documents prepared. At this juncture, with the MOU still under negotiation, the on-going COVID-19 crisis limiting access to in-person community engagement, and the challenges that many community members face with accessing this complex material, I believe that there is a pressing need for

additional time to review, comprehend, and comment on the FEIS. Thank you for considering my request of extending the comment period so that we may provide relevant, thoughtful, and timely comments on the FEIS.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lina Hidalgo". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a prominent initial "L".

Lina Hidalgo
Harris County Judge