

December 9, 2020

Via Email

Attention: Brian R. Barth, Director of Project Planning and Development  
Texas Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 1386  
Houston, Texas 77251  
[HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov](mailto:HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov)

RE: Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

Dear Chairman Bruce Bugg and Members of the Texas Transportation Commission,

On behalf of Harris County Precinct One, I respectfully request that TxDOT **not proceed** with the I-45 (NHHIP) project.

Precinct One residents deserve to have access to clean, safe, and affordable options for mobility. As currently designed, the I-45 project would displace thousands of people and hundreds of businesses, investing \$7 billion in taxpayer dollars toward a singularly car-focused project that completely ignores the potential negative impacts and does not adequately address the transportation needs of our residents.

Our region needs investment in transportation that takes into account sustainable mobility needs that provide equitable access and opportunities for all residents. TxDOT should immediately stop all right of way acquisition, particularly north of Buffalo Bayou, and come to the table to work collaboratively with Harris County, the City of Houston, and METRO. We have proposed design ideas, and believe that the proposed alternative can produce a project that provides benefits to all residents of Harris County.

Precinct One's issues with the proposed project, and in particular the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), include the following:

- The document that TxDOT has submitted, which is required under federal law, is inaccurate and incomplete. It contains statements that are patently false, such as the assertion that no bus service will be permanently impacted by the project.
- It has numerous inconsistencies, like the mismatch between the text and the schematics on the design of frontage road bike facilities. It is missing documentation for key claims, like the purported safety improvements.
- It also fails to analyze major impacts of the project, such as changes to local traffic as a result of eliminated ramps and the removal of local street connections.

This last point is my biggest objection as representative of the residents of Precinct One. This project as planned would involve the loss of significant affordable housing, would reduce METRO service in the area, and would cause significant environmental impacts on the Buffalo


Bayou Greenways. The impacts on the Bayou Greenways are clearly documented, and Harris County Flood Control District has clearly stated that these are recreational spaces, and therefore under federal 4(f) regulations mitigation is required. Thus far, TxDOT has not proposed adequate measures to remedy any of these impacts. The proposed housing programs fall far short of offsetting the loss of affordable housing, and TxDOT fails to propose any replacements for impacted pedestrian and bike paths.

The Harris County letter, department letters, and attached reports provide ample detail on all these items.

The residents of Precinct One deserved better than this project, which is the result of a flawed process based on outdated traffic projections. Many reasonable alternatives with far fewer impacts and potentially greater benefits for our county residents, have not even been considered. The selection criteria for this project explicitly favored wealthier, whiter neighborhoods over communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. Our residents deserve investments in projects that benefit residents across different modes of transportation and mobility, especially those who are the most vulnerable.

I will once again reiterate my request that TxDOT **not proceed** with the I-45 (NHHIP) project, and that you will join the County, the City of Houston, and METRO in order to consider alternatives that will truly benefit our residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Ellis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line to the left of the name.

Rodney Ellis  
Commissioner  
Harris County Precinct One

Attachments:

[Harris County Letter, Judge Lina Hidalgo](#)

[City of Houston Letter, Mayor, Sylvester Turner](#)

[Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County Letter, Thomas Lambert](#)

[Harris County Engineering Department, Harris County Toll Road Authority and Harris County Flood Control District Letter](#)