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Congress of the United States
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
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AND CITIZENSHIP

TASK FORCE ON POVERTY AND OPPORTUNITY
VICE CHAIR ON URBAN POVERTY

December 9, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Ryan,

I am writing to you today to reiterate my concerns with the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) that were not fully addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Additionally, I have included a letter from myself and other elected officials from 2017, expressing the same concerns.

The concerns from the 2017 letter revolve around the “disproportionate impact on low-income and disadvantaged communities” which do not appear to have been resolved in the FEIS. The 2017 letter, with comments from the community, clearly stated opposition to displacement of community members and businesses, yet the FEIS still fails to adequately mitigate this impact. Another concern is the displacement of our unauthorized immigrant neighbors who may not receive the same financial support as the rest of the community. While renters and homeowners will largely receive the support needed to find a new home in the same neighborhood, these benefits will be unavailable to immigrant families.

Displacement does not discriminate based on citizenship status, and neither should the assistance those families receive. I urge TxDOT to find a solution to this issue prior to proceeding and certainly prior to displacing Houstonians.

Beyond the obvious impact of displacement, the communities adjacent to the project will be negatively impacted by both noise and air pollution. These very real environmental concerns will harm the largely communities of color that live alongside the I45 corridor. Children at nearby schools will suffer from the noise, while all people along the project will see their health negatively impacted by vehicle emissions.

I also want to reiterate my support for adding green space to the community through this project. These same disadvantaged communities lack the same access to parks as other communities, so I encourage TxDOT to add more green space in the project where possible, particularly in the proposed lid park in segment 2.

Lastly, I urge TxDOT to take the public comments received on the FEIS into serious consideration. The NHHIP is a generational project that will forever change the landscape of Houston. The public deserves to have a say in this project, given the massive impact they will feel from it.

While I understand the challenges with the current I-45 and the need for change, until my concerns are addressed, I will not be predisposed to support the project. Thank you for your attention on these matters. I look forward to working with TxDOT to ensure these issues are resolved.

Sincerely,



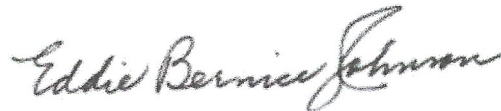
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress