

## Appendix 9.17

### Public Comment Process

## Conformity Postings and Hearings

The Conformity and associated documents originally were posted on February 6, 2005. This date marks the beginning of the public comment period. A public workshop was held on Conformity at H-GAC from 9:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M Saturday, February 12, 2005. The analysis was presented, and staff were on hand to answer questions about the process.

The Conformity results were revised and reposted on March 2, 2005. A public hearing was held at 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. Wednesday March 30, 2005. A court reporter transcribed the meeting and comments that were presented. The public comment period concluded at 5:00 P.M. Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Conformity document was available on the H-GAC web site, in the H-GAC library for public viewing, and it was made available at a print shop where copies could be made. Copies of Conformity CD-ROMS were available upon request.

Location of 2/6/05 Workshop and 3/30/05 Public Hearing:

H-GAC  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room A  
3555 Timmons Lane  
Houston, Texas 77027

Web site:

<http://www.h-gac.com/HGAC/Departments/Transportation/Conformity/Documents.htm>

Print Shop:

VCI  
3773 Richmond Avenue  
Houston, TX 77027  
(713) 626-4045

## Comments Received

In response to comments about the H-GAC public outreach system, a database was formed to store all public comments. All comments H-GAC received were entered into this database. The database insures that all comments received are assigned to an H-GAC staff person to answer.

A large number of forms were turned in to H-GAC. While large in number, most of these comments focused on a narrow range of topics. These are addressed in the following letter. The Conformity public meeting transcript follows the letter.



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**HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL**

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### **Frequently Asked Questions – April 2005**

**1) What is the status of the proposed toll road along the northwest corridor Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad right of way?**

The 2025 RTP shows a potential toll road located in the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe railroad right-of-way (near SH 249). This project was a candidate under consideration by the Harris County Toll Road Authority as part of its “pooled projects list”. At the time the list was developed, the BNSF railroad was considering abandoning this ROW. Today BNSF is planning to continue to use this corridor. There are currently no plans to build a toll road in this railroad corridor. At the request of Harris County, this project will be removed from the 2025 Plan as soon as possible. A letter from Harris County Judge Robert Eckels explaining the status of this can be found on the H-GAC website at [www.h-gac.com/transportation](http://www.h-gac.com/transportation).

**2) What are “Smart Streets?”**

The Smart Streets concept is a tool to increase mobility, improve transit access and safety by providing operational improvements along strategic regional thoroughfares. Smart Streets utilizes a “tool box” of methodologies to increase mobility. This tool box includes synchronized lights, driveway consolidation, provisions for turning lanes, roundabouts, medians, and other intersection improvements. The anticipated result of the expansion of these strategically identified regional thoroughfares is a reduction in the need for additional lane miles of free and/or tolled facilities. More detailed information on the Smart Streets concept can be found in the Operations and System Maintenance section of the *2025 RTP* on the H-GAC website.

**3) Whom do I contact regarding the City of Houston sponsored projects in the 2025 RTP?**

To inquire about City of Houston sponsored projects in your areas, contact your City Council representative. City of Houston City Council information can be found on the City of Houston’s website at <http://www.houstontx.gov>. The City of Houston also has representation on the H-GAC Transportation Policy Council. The TPC representatives for the City of Houston are Council Member Pam Holm – District G, Council Member Ronald Green – At Large Position 4, and Michael Marcotte, P.E. – Director of Public Works and Engineering Department.

**4) Will the construction of new toll roads or roadway improvements increase the likelihood of flooding in the area?**

The Harris County Flood Control Management District has stated generally that the anticipated increase of impervious surfaces in the proposed project(s) of the *2025 RTP* will not significantly increase the likelihood of flooding. However, proposed construction

activities may require additional environmental approval and/or permits from agencies such as the US Corps of Engineers and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. During the design phase of permit development, specific assessment on the drainage impact of the complete project as well as control of run-off during construction must be evaluated and mitigated.

**5) What are the proposed improvements in the 2025 RTP for the Oak Forest Area?**

The proposed improvements for the Oak Forest area can now be found on the Transportation page of the H-GAC website at [www.h-gac.com/transportation](http://www.h-gac.com/transportation).

**6) What are the proposed improvements in the 2025 RTP for the Westbury area?**

The proposed improvements for the Westbury area can be found on the Transportation page of the H-GAC website at [www.h-gac.com/transportation](http://www.h-gac.com/transportation).

**7) Is the Old Hempstead/Highway 290 being considered for a toll road facility?**

The HCTRA is working with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and METRO to develop toll alternatives in the Old Hempstead/Hwy 290 railroad right of way to relieve congestion on US 290.

**8) Is commuter rail being considered for the Northwest Corridor?**

Commuter rail in the Northwest (US 290) Corridor is being considered for further study in the regional commuter rail conceptual plan. It is not included in the *2025 RTP*.

**9) Do citizens get to vote on proposed new toll roads?**

In September 1983, Harris County voters approved a referendum that led to the establishment of the Harris County Toll Road Authority by the Harris County Commissioners Court. The referendum also authorized the issuance of general obligation bonds for the purpose of constructing, maintaining, and operating toll roads in Harris County. So while the citizenry does not have an opportunity to vote on individual toll projects proposed for the region, the citizenry does have an opportunity to vote on transportation related referendums.

**10) What happens next to the projects in the 2025 RTP?**

Projects are dependent on activities by the state, local governments and transit agencies. The RTP groups projects into three timeframes: long-range, short-range and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Long-range projects are based on forecasted needs. Short-Range projects are those under development for implementation within four to ten years. Short-Range projects go through a number of steps including environmental assessment, EIS, preliminary engineering and design, financial planning and additional public outreach. TIP projects are authorized to be implemented. They have met the requirements for project readiness, including reliable cost estimates, financial commitments, and substantial right-of-way acquisition. TIP projects can be scheduled for implementation within the next one to three years. The projects listed in the TIP are the only 'fully funded' roadway projects within the RTP.

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PUBLIC MEETING ON  
THE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)

MARCH 30, 2005  
6:00 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*  
HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL  
3555 TIMMONS LANE  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77027  
\*\*\*\*\*

REPORTED BY: MARY KATHRYN PIPER, C.S.R.

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Appendix 9.17--Transcript

1                   MR. CLARK: Good evening. I'd like to welcome  
2 you all to join us tonight; and if you would please, make your  
3 way down the front where you have the best student to view the  
4 presentation information that we have for you this evening.

5                   AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hey, we're starting the  
6 meeting, folks.

7                   MR. CLARK: Hopefully, we'll still have time to  
8 visit after our prepared remarks; but we want to get right to  
9 your comments and give as much opportunity to you to learn  
10 about our Regional Transportation Plan and our TIP. My name is  
11 Alan Clark, and I'm the Director of the Transportation and Air  
12 Quality Planning Program here at the Houston-Galveston Area  
13 Council. And at tonight's meeting, we're really focussing on  
14 two major documents: Our region's 2025 Long-range  
15 Transportation Plan; and on the other end of the time scale,  
16 our immediate Transportation Improvement Program, which is a  
17 three-year listing of transportation projects, either funded  
18 locally through the State or through federal sources. We've  
19 included both federal and locally-funded projects to give you  
20 as complete as possible an idea of the major transportation  
21 improvements in our region. We're going to begin tonight with  
22 an overview, a short presentation by our Transportation Policy  
23 Council Chairman, Harris County Judge Robert Eckels.

24   (The video begins.)

25                   JUDGE ECKELS: Within every community of Harris

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1 County, the Houston-Galveston area is always changing, always  
2 growing. We are works in progress, works that require an  
3 unending stream of ideas in the vision of excellence. This is  
4 one of the great products of that kind of vision: Houston  
5 Transtar, a state-of-the-art nerve center for our area's  
6 transportation. We can look at the screens and see today's  
7 traffic patterns; and we must take a look at tomorrow, as well,  
8 to see what challenges that growth and prosperity will bring  
9 us. I want to share with you a vision for that future, a  
10 vision that ensures improved mobility, improved safety and an  
11 enhanced quality of life. Look ahead with me to 2025 so we can  
12 all get from here to there and from here to the future.

13 MR. STONE: It may not surprise you to know that  
14 the Houston-Galveston area, with Harris County at its center,  
15 is growing at a faster rate than Texas or the United States;  
16 but hold on. Because by the year 2025 -- and that's not so far  
17 off -- our eight-county area is going to add over 3 million  
18 people. We're going to have a lot of new neighbors and plenty  
19 of company in our community. In order to clear today's  
20 congestion and tomorrow's, Harris County Judge Robert Eckels  
21 has been working with some of the brightest minds in our area  
22 to come up with a vision for our transportation future. He's  
23 been listening to the people of this eight-county area, folks  
24 like you and me, who look to a future not of dead ends, but of  
25 possibilities and opportunities.

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1                   That future comes into focus with the  
2 Houston-Galveston Area Council's 2025 Regional Transportation  
3 Plan. It's a planning process that is required by federal law.  
4 Our region must develop a transportation plan every three to  
5 five years in order for us to draw down federal dollars to pay  
6 for our transit and transportation projects. The 2025 Regional  
7 Transportation Plan is the latest result of this required  
8 transportation planning. Those who work with Judge Eckels to  
9 craft the plan will tell you that they have kept one vision in  
10 mind: To enhance mobility by providing an efficient,  
11 affordable, safe and environmentally responsible transportation  
12 system for both people and goods.

13                   As our area grows, the plan will grow with it,  
14 evolving to meet the needs of our thriving communities, always  
15 seeking to achieve four goals; and it's no secret what Goal  
16 Number 1 is: Reduce congestion. We simply must make the best  
17 use of our existing roadways in order to reduce congestion; and  
18 that's why the plan calls for the expansion of select roadways,  
19 the growth of bus and rail transit, greater facilities for  
20 bicyclists and pedestrians and the reduction of traffic  
21 conflicts with trains and trucks. Take a look at Allen  
22 Parkway. It may very well be one window into an improved  
23 future. It's an example of a smart street -- better traffic  
24 flow; better transit service; and few, if any, intersection  
25 bottlenecks.

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1                   The plan envisions the use of traffic and access  
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2 management, as well as landscaping and pedestrian improvement.  
3 Since the size and character of each roadway is different,  
4 residents and business owners will have the opportunity to work  
5 with the city or the county governments to tailor these smart  
6 streets to fit their needs. The plan calls for extensive  
7 transit expansion: 64.8 more miles of light rail; and 21 miles  
8 of commuter rail; 44 new bus routes to increase bus service by  
9 50 percent; a signature express service with five new express  
10 crosstown routes; nine new transit centers; nine new park and  
11 ride lots. All of this builds on the current voter-approved  
12 Metro Solution Plan, but the 2025 plan extends to communities  
13 beyond the Metro service area. It calls for the expansion of  
14 existing transit services in the woodlands, Galveston and Lake  
15 Jackson/Angleton/Freeport areas.

16                   The plan also amounts significant opportunities  
17 for development of new public transit services for Brazoria,  
18 Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery Counties. One of  
19 the next steps will be further analysis of potential commuter  
20 rail service on existing railway corridors.

21                   Goal Number 2: Preserve and maintain existing  
22 transportation infrastructures. Drive through just about any  
23 part of the Houston-Galveston area and you will face the sad  
24 reality of our roadways. Too many are simply worn out and  
25 badly in need of repair. That's why the plan looks to meet a

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1 second goal: To preserve our road network and maintain it  
2 properly. Now, it's going to cost money; but the cost of  
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3 ignoring the problem is far higher.

4                   The 2025 vision calls for \$14.3 billion to  
5 rebuild these worn out roadways. There will be reconstruction,  
6 resurfacing and rehabilitation projects, all designed to  
7 prevent the wearing away and extend the life and usefulness of  
8 those roads we depend on. Another 8.9 billion will be used for  
9 regular maintenance and roadway operations. Now, that's  
10 everything from filling pot holds and cleaning streets to  
11 keeping signs and signals up-to-date and in operation. \$2.9  
12 billion is earmarked for preventative maintenance and  
13 rehabilitation for our public transportation system, and  
14 another 9.6 billion for transit operations and regular  
15 maintenance.

16                   JUDGE ECKELS: We need to plan for that  
17 improvement. We need to plan for the construction and  
18 management of that improvement in stages so that it doesn't  
19 interfere with traffic and the system as we work on the  
20 roadways in this community.

21                   MR. STONE: Goal 3: Improve transportation  
22 safety and security. One of our area's biggest problems is  
23 quite literally a matter of life and death. The Houston area  
24 has the worst transportation safety problems in the state. Our  
25 crash and injury rates are higher than the national average.

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1                   JUDGE ECKELS: We have some of the most  
2 dangerous roadways right here in Harris County, and we have  
3 identified several hundred hot spots with intersections that we  
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4 can -- we can improve. We can make the intersections better.  
5 We can make them safer.

6 MR. STONE: We've identified 344 major crash  
7 spots around our area. \$172 million will be allocated to  
8 improve safety in those specific hot spots. The program not  
9 only will save lives, it will save time by reducing congestion.  
10 And it will save money: An estimated \$392 million each year in  
11 reduced accident-related costs.

12 Goal 4 is being environmentally responsible.  
13 None of these bold solutions can become a reality unless they  
14 strike a balance that renders them livable as well as workable.  
15 We live in an increasingly diverse region; and the gifts of  
16 nature that we treasure must be protected, as well. Our goal  
17 to be environmentally responsible means that the plan will play  
18 an important role in improving air quality.

19 JUDGE ECKELS: A more livable community that  
20 incorporates roads and freeways and tollways and trains and  
21 commuter rails and pedestrian trails and bicycle trails and  
22 links it together in a system that functions better for the  
23 City of Houston.

24 MR. STONE: This plan is not the end of the  
25 process. It's an evolving plan that will continue to meet the

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8

1 needs of our growing, thriving communities.

2 JUDGE ECKELS: What we have shown you is a broad  
3 outline, a range of solutions and possibilities. The  
4 congestion that all too often rules our lives does not have to

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5 block our future growth. We can have a transportation system  
6 that is safe, that is convenient and that is reliable. With  
7 the 2025 vision, a bright future finally comes into focus.

8 (The video ends.)

9 MR. CLARK: Next I'm going to give you a quick  
10 overview of this second of our major documents, the 2004 to  
11 2008 Transportation Improvement Program. Can I have the next  
12 slide on that one?

13 We update the Transportation Improvement Program  
14 every year because it's a revolving three-year cycle of  
15 projects. The TIP has to meet many requirements, including  
16 financial constraint. In other words, we cannot program funds  
17 for the rehabilitation, the operation, the construction of  
18 transportation projects that exceed the amount of funds that we  
19 believe will be reasonably available. Okay. As you see on  
20 this slide, it also requires many considerations in terms of  
21 planning, collaboration with local governments and state -- and  
22 state agencies, as well as our transportation services  
23 providers. Next slide, please.

24 Why is it we -- why do we need to produce this  
25 document? Well, simply, we have to decide with the scarce

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1 transportation resources that we have what should be the most  
2 important investments that we can make. This process is used  
3 to identify projects which best meet the goals of our Regional  
4 Transportation Plan and those of our local government. There  
5 are three main areas that we evaluate potential candidates for  
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6 this process. First, the project has to be ready for  
7 implementation before entering this last stage. It can take  
8 between ten and 20 years for a good transportation idea to be  
9 realized as an actual transportation project because it needs  
10 to go through very careful planning steps to determine the  
11 project's purpose, the needs that it will be addressing, the  
12 way in which the project supports other goals in the  
13 communities and neighborhoods that it affects. After going  
14 through the planning process, there's a need to evaluate the  
15 project to determine what its design characteristics will be;  
16 how much it will cost to implement, to operate and to maintain;  
17 and then what its potential environmental sequences could be,  
18 whether or not there are mitigation measures that may be  
19 required to ensure the projects successful complementing of the  
20 community that it serves.

21           After that, we get into the final stages of the  
22 projects's development. We must acquire the right-of-way if it  
23 is the type of project that requires construction activity. We  
24 may need to relocate communities; and we may need to -- in the  
25 process of developing this project, determine if there are

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1 other steps which have to be taken prior to being ready to  
2 actually construct the final project. All this, as I said, can  
3 take many years before programming -- before a project is ready  
4 to be considered ready for the final programming for  
5 construction. And doing that, once a project has reached that  
6 stage, we are then ready to weigh the benefits of this project

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7 against other candidates for funding. The Transportation  
8 Policy Council, which is composed of representatives of our  
9 local governments, the Texas Department of Transportation and  
10 our transportation agencies establish criteria for doing this  
11 analysis of projects. Next slide please.

12 In addition to the numerical analysis of the  
13 potential benefits of the candidate projects, HGAC has held  
14 open houses where project sponsors are able to explain to  
15 members of the public and others who are interested the purpose  
16 of their objective and what it is they intend to accomplish.  
17 HGAC also held interviews with those local governments and  
18 transportation agencies who were proposing to sponsor various  
19 projects to understand even better what the goal, purpose and  
20 results of this project might be. These interviews were held  
21 by our TIP Subcommittee, as well as staff members; and then,  
22 ultimately, we recommended the best list of projects in ranking  
23 order to our Transportation Policy Council. You can see the  
24 considerations that we made in developing those. Next slide,  
25 please.

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11

1 And here is a summary of the funded part of our  
2 TIP with the 2006/7 and 8 years. It would encompass some \$4.3  
3 billion of investment. You can see on this slide the kinds of  
4 things that would be developed with those funds. About half a  
5 billion dollars -- I'm sorry, almost a billion of that  
6 investment would be for transit activities. About 20 --  
7 something -- over 2 billion would be for projects that are

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8 related to expanding our system capacity.

9           These projects might also include a significant  
10 portion of the rehabilitation of an existing facility, as we  
11 have with many projects like the Katy Freeway, for example.  
12 Although the completed project will include additional travel  
13 lanes, we're replacing the existing facility because it's worn  
14 out. We have to actually tear down those structures and build  
15 them new in order to make sure that they can have the proper  
16 design, meet current design criteria and the needs we have in  
17 that corridor. So, even though it says \$2.2 billion for added  
18 capacity, a good portion of that money will replace the old  
19 facility that we may be improving; and you see the other uses  
20 that we have contemplated in this plan. The port and airport  
21 expenditures relate to road projects providing access to some  
22 of our regions ports and airport facilities, not to the actual  
23 expansion of our airports and ports.

24           Those are documented in our long-range Regional  
25 Transportation Plan but they are not documented in the TIP.

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1 And those improvements or expansion plans are not subject to  
2 the approval of our Transportation Policy Council. Next slide.

3           This slide quickly shows you where we're  
4 spending the money. The Transportation Improvement Plan and  
5 our long-range Regional Transportation Plan covers an  
6 eight-county region centered on Harris County that includes  
7 seven additional counties that create a ring around Harris  
8 County. I would say -- the only comment I would make about

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9 this slide is that these proportions vary from one TIP period  
10 to another, depending on the nature of the projects, which are  
11 under development. Currently, a very large portion of this pie  
12 is in Harris County, in part due to the continuing construction  
13 on several major projects, such as the Katy Freeway, West Loop.  
14 In addition to that, we have construction projects like the  
15 extension of the Harris County Hardy Toll Road into downtown  
16 Houston and the completion of the reconstruction of US 59 into  
17 downtown Houston. In the future, you're going to see other  
18 counties will see a higher amount of investment due to projects  
19 that are moving through them. For example, Montgomery County  
20 has a large amount of investment because of the completion of  
21 Interstate 45, which is continuing. Now it's completed through  
22 the woodlands area continuing up through Conroe and beyond.  
23 Next slide, Jerry.

24 This is a table I've added just because the  
25 numbers are sometimes hard to see on the uses of funds. I'm

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13

1 not going to go through this specifically.

2 We're now in the final stages of both our plan  
3 and our TIP process. Tonight we're here to invite your comment  
4 on those documents and upon an important air quality assessment  
5 that we have performed for the plan, which incorporates the  
6 three-year TIP processes.

7 Over on my right (indicating) -- hopefully, you  
8 had a chance to look at some of the story boards there. We  
9 have a slide which shows our comparison of the vehicle

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10 emissions that we have projected with the implementation of the  
11 projects in our TIP and our long-range Regional Transportation  
12 Plan. I'm happy to tell you that we will meet or even surpass  
13 the emissions reductions that are contemplated in the Texas  
14 Council on Environmental Qualities State Implementation Plan  
15 for air quality for our region. This is an important  
16 requirement for several reasons: One, we're all concerned  
17 about the health of all who live and work in our region, and  
18 obtaining clear air goals is a very important goal for our  
19 local governments and all who live here; second, it's a  
20 federally mandated requirement for this plan and for our TIP  
21 process.

22                   There is a portion of our TIP document which is  
23 not funded. We have dubbed this portion of our document,  
24 "Contingency Projects List." Why would we include projects in  
25 the TIP which are not yet funded? We have done so, in part,

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1 because the federal government, our federal legislators, are,  
2 even as we speak, debating the reauthorization of a multi-year  
3 federal bill that will determine the federal highway and  
4 transit funds available to our state and to our region. We  
5 know that the discussion that is ongoing in Washington  
6 represents an increase over the levels of transportation  
7 funding, which we have programmed in our TIP. We have  
8 restricted our TIP to the historical levels of funding.

9                   We've experienced under the current bill. But  
10 we don't think it's prudent for us to program funds for

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11 projects when Washington has yet to take an action. Therefore,  
12 we believe that it was wise to work with our local governments  
13 and transportation agencies on projects which could become  
14 funded activities depending on the outcome of this important  
15 federal legislation. So, we've included this contingency list  
16 that's been shown in a priority order; and to the extent that  
17 we have funds available in this next three-year time period, we  
18 will look to move projects from this contingency list to funded  
19 part of our TIP. We will do that, however, through formal  
20 action by the Transportation Policy Council; and there will be  
21 subsequent opportunity for public comment. So, we're giving  
22 you sort of an advanced look at this three-year document at  
23 projects that may become funded early in this next three-year  
24 window.

25 And, of course, for additional detailed

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1 information on both of our plan and our TIP, we have a full  
2 complement of the plan and TIP documents on our website. If  
3 you don't have access to the web, we'd be happy to make paper  
4 copies for you to review or send them to you in some other way  
5 that makes it easy for you to review them. They are fairly  
6 extensive. We also have on our website something called the  
7 "Project Viewer." It's something that you can draw a box on  
8 and find projects that are in the part of our region that  
9 you're most interested in. In addition to seeing those  
10 projects on a map, you will then see a table which lists the  
11 projects and the information relevant to them.

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12                   with that, that concludes the prepared remarks  
13 that I have for you tonight. What we'd like to do is move into  
14 the comment portion of our meeting tonight for those of you who  
15 would like to give comments for our official record. We will  
16 be recording those comments with our transcriptionist tonight.  
17 So. I would ask that you give us your name, the -- if you're  
18 here representing a local government or a group or an area of  
19 town. If you would, please state that; and then I would ask  
20 you to please take no more than three to five minutes for your  
21 comment. Following the comments that we receive tonight, if  
22 time permits, we will allow for informal questions and answers  
23 and discussion with you. We want to be available to you for  
24 your questions and thoughts about our plan process.

25                   I've just been handed the list of persons who

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1 have indicated they would like to speak tonight. I'm going to  
2 call the persons up in the order in which they've indicated  
3 they would like to speak; and if you did not sign up on our  
4 sheet but would like to provide public comment after these  
5 persons have been called, I will give you an opportunity to  
6 still make comment for our record. Tonight the first person is  
7 Jackie Freeman, representing Bike Houston. Jackie, would you  
8 please come here and offer your comments. And if you don't  
9 mind, kind of speak close to this microphone so you can be  
10 heard well.

11                   MS. FREEMAN: Okay.

12                   MR. CLARK: And let me pull this down to you.  
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13 MS. FREEMAN: Okay. Because I'm short. My  
14 comments will be short, also. I'm representing Bike Houston,  
15 which is our area bicycle advocacy group. I'm also involved  
16 with the Houston bicycle community and also a commuter to the  
17 Texas Medical Center.

18 I'm just wanting to encourage all of the  
19 agencies involved in this to include accommodations for  
20 bicycles and pedestrians in our transportation plan. As we  
21 expand our roads and rail lines and toll roads and bus routes,  
22 we need to build complete streets that include everybody who  
23 might be traveling on them. And I think we need to get bike  
24 racks on all of our buses, and we need to make certain that  
25 our C mac funds are spent wisely and properly. I have some

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1 copies of the City of Houston's updated bike map. So, if  
2 anybody wants one, I have them with me. Thank you.

3 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Jackie. Next is Ronald  
4 Riley, Mayor of the City of Seabrook. Thank you for joining us  
5 tonight, Mayor.

6 MAYOR RILEY: Thank you for this opportunity.  
7 Also, I am joined by the president of our economic development  
8 corporation. And the reason that we're speaking is because  
9 they're talking about expanding 146 in the City of Seabrook all  
10 along from La Porte, from I-45, through Texas City; and the  
11 part that's going through Seabrook, they want to make unique in  
12 the essence that it would have a Seabrook bypass that would  
13 rise up north of Seabrook in Pasadena and not go back down

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14 until it's far south of Seabrook, with no onramps or off ramps.  
15 This would, of course, devastate our commercial industry. It  
16 would also be forced -- because of that design, it would be  
17 forced to stay up and would also raise havoc with the  
18 residents, which there's literally thousands of homes along 146  
19 at that point that would be affected by the noise of having an  
20 elevated highway literally in their backyards.

21 Another aspect -- so, in any event, we also had  
22 contracted our city engineers -- we did come up with  
23 alternatives where there would be some off ramps and just a  
24 highway with overpasses. And it would be an acceptable design  
25 and so we know that is a don't way of handling it and would

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1 expect that TXDOT would take that into consideration.

2 And then, finally, one last comment that isn't  
3 specifically to the roads; but we've been made aware that  
4 currently in Austin, they're trying to pass a bill that will  
5 allow container trucks to have their limit raised another  
6 10,000 pounds above what they currently are and we would find  
7 twofold reasons why we're totally against that one. Of course,  
8 that would devastate our roads to have that much heavier  
9 trucks; and, two, the safety effect of the trucks capsizing.  
10 We've already had a container truck capsize in Seabrook just  
11 about nine months ago. It was carrying cyanide and had the  
12 potential of causing major devastation. We lucked out.  
13 Because there was no water around because had water hit it, it  
14 would have been become famous or infamous. Thank you.

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15 MR. CLARK: Thank you, Mayor.

16 (APPLAUSE).

17 MR. CLARK: And I'm sorry. I'm having some  
18 difficult with the next name, but I think it might be -- I  
19 think it might be your name that I'm looking at. Did you sign  
20 up to speak tonight? I apologize.

21 MR. MARRACK: I'm sorry. I'll print next time.

22 MR. CLARK: That's all right. I should know you  
23 by now.

24 MR. MARRACK: I'm David Marrack, M-a-r-r-a-c-k.  
25 I live in the Jason area, and I thoroughly sympathize with the

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1 mayor of Seabrook and the citizens of Seabrook. We've had some  
2 of this problem or something like this problem -- something I  
3 consider a major problem in the City of Bellaire. When 610 was  
4 being built in the 1955-56 period, it split that city and made  
5 it an east side and a west side; and they don't talk. This is  
6 a real psychological issue for a city to be split in half by a  
7 freeway.

8 This County Judge Eckels got it right -- of  
9 course, it was politically right -- to talk about the spending.  
10 This plan spending efforts on alternative transportation: Rail  
11 and better buses, fast or stopping, local. But I -- the shot  
12 that was put up there shows half the money going to more roads  
13 and only a small part -- less than a quarter going to more  
14 transports. I see things upside down. I suggest that money on  
15 highways needs to be spent on repairing highways.

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16                   We've got some places where lanes suddenly  
17 vanish and you wonder where they go. That should never be. If  
18 you drive elsewhere in the world on freeways, lanes don't  
19 vanish. TXDOT is good at making vanishing lanes.

20                   I have some real problems, too, with the whole  
21 concept or, say, "premises," of the plan. The assumption that  
22 the population is going to go up by 3 million, nearly double in  
23 20 years on, I think, is totally fallacious. There's no  
24 evidence for this. They're extrapolating from the past, and  
25 the past is not what the future is going to look at. We're

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1 already seeing with the rising gas prices. Some people don't  
2 understand what it means when one and a quarter billion Chinese  
3 are expanding at about 10 times per second and demanding for  
4 liquid fuel like gasoline at about 15 percent; but they're  
5 going to compete strictly with us.

6                   They are the manufacturers of the world today.  
7 We aren't. So, we're going to have some real problems with our  
8 economics and jobs with these people. It ain't going to be in,  
9 in other words, petrochemical industry. In other words, the  
10 big business is going to be the companies generating the  
11 extracting the petroleum. So, I think that is the basis.

12                   Secondly, as the gas prices get to \$4 and \$5 per  
13 gallon, as they probably will, people will begin to think  
14 differently about living in the boondocks. These subdivisions  
15 out in west Harris County and down in Fort Bend County are  
16 going to have some real problems. Already sales of houses in

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17 far west Harris County are declining. SUV sales and big truck  
18 sales to private individuals is going down. In fact, it's hard  
19 to sell one. Go and talk to the dealers. People are beginning  
20 to feel the pinch of the two-dollar gas, and it's going up.

21 I think we need to rethink this plan and be  
22 prepared for a much more concentrated society and population  
23 and for providing with a proper mobility. I point out to you  
24 that in Europe, where the price of gas is so much higher, the  
25 taxes go to supporting rail and bus services, unlike this

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1 country, around here certainly. And lastly, I have concerns  
2 about the ability to meet that conformity requirements over  
3 there.

4 If we really were to truly put 3 million more  
5 people on the road, we're going to have 175 percent or so more;  
6 cars and you'll find it difficult to believe that we're going  
7 to be able to reduce the emissions from those cars by 75  
8 percent from their present position. Don't forget: A lot of  
9 it is coming from diesel trucks and diesel-powered units and  
10 they have a life and they'll still be going in 2025 polluting,  
11 just as they are now because we can't afford to change them. I  
12 think we've got some real problems. We need to do some real  
13 thinking about where we are going, about where we'll be ten to  
14 15 to 20 years from now because it is not going to look like  
15 today and it's not going to look like yesterday either. Thank  
16 you.

17 (APPLAUSE).

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18 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Next is Pat VanHout.  
19 Pat. After that, it will be Tom Stansell.

20 MS. VANHOUT: Hi. I have several disconnected  
21 little things and a question. In the last TCP meeting, it was  
22 said that you will try to fit roads to community values; and I  
23 would like to know: what kind of community values you look at  
24 and how do you fit the roads to that? So, maybe you could  
25 address that later.

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1 MR. CLARK: Yes, I will.

2 MS. VANHOUT: 225 at some time is supposed to be  
3 widened; and much of the space along there -- there is enough  
4 grass on each side that you can take space for other lanes --  
5 and you're not damaging anything and you're not having to take  
6 down buildings, but there's a section through the central --  
7 what was the old part of Pasadena from west of Shaffer to east  
8 of Pasadena Boulevard where the road is raised, and right next  
9 to that is the feeder and right next to that is businesses and  
10 a high school. And I would suggest that when you get to doing  
11 that, that rather than try to move everything outward, that you  
12 expand over the feeder. And that way you're not having to take  
13 more land on the side.

14 Also, in the last TCP meeting, there was the  
15 comment that you don't get very many comments at this kind of a  
16 hearing. That you hear from one person in a thousand and  
17 sometimes -- I don't remember how it was worded, but kind of  
18 the "odd ball people" that you hear from. And I would say that

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19 part of the reason for that is that when people speak up and  
20 they're ignored, they're less likely to speak up again. And  
21 they become alienated from government and this is a problem  
22 that no matter where in government it occurs, it affects all  
23 other levels. If someone has been ignored by the local  
24 government, they're less likely to come talk to you because  
25 they don't expect to get more results here than they would

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23

1 elsewhere. And this is something that I have seen in Pasadena.  
2 I've seen many people say that once the government's made up  
3 their mind, you can't do anything about it. I've spoken here  
4 before about a planned extension of Strawberry Road, which is  
5 in the TIP. You indicated this is not really in the TIP,  
6 should this be addressed here or when --

7 MR. CLARK: No, the TIP is open for comment.

8 MS. VANHOUT: There is a road called Strawberry  
9 in Pasadena, which does not go all the way to 225. There are  
10 other routes to 225, but the city has decided to extend this  
11 road through a residential area. There are many houses and  
12 several businesses. It is an extremely unpopular plan with the  
13 people who live in that area and with the people who live south  
14 on Strawberry, who supposedly would benefit most from this  
15 project. There are a number of business people and people with  
16 money in the community who would like it, but the average  
17 citizens do not want it. They have said so.

18 Over 1800 of them have signed a petition. It  
19 has been ignored. In the ranking procedure that got designed

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20 to the contingency in the last meeting, I think there are some  
21 problems within the -- within the ranking procedure not being  
22 looked at correctly. One of them being environmental justice.  
23 The area where this would be has a very high Hispanic  
24 population. A number of these people do not speak or read  
25 English; therefore, any attempt to reach them through the local

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1 newspaper will not reach them. No letters were sent to these  
2 people when the planning was done.

3                   The project was given five points for  
4 environmental justice because later the city had meetings and  
5 they had one in Spanish but that meeting was to tell people  
6 what had been looked at and what the final plan was and it was  
7 not to get any input from them in making the plan. It's said  
8 that this would be an evacuation route for people going north  
9 from Clear Lake evacuating from a hurricane. They would take  
10 45. They would take Space Center Boulevard, which connects to  
11 Randolph and Red Bluff; and they would not be that likely to  
12 take Strawberry.

13                   For people evacuation toward the south from the  
14 plants, they are likely to go both directions on 225 and take  
15 whatever southbound streets are closest to the plants. They  
16 would not be likely to get on Pasadena Boulevard and then angle  
17 off that onto Strawberry. If they get on Pasadena Boulevard,  
18 they'll stay on that and head straight south rather than  
19 angling; but this was given four points for that.

20                   There are other things that would be much more  
Page 23

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21 useful as far as helping air quality. There has been a problem  
22 with the timing of traffic lights on Pasadena Boulevard and  
23 that -- at one point, that was improved and then it had dropped  
24 back to being more of a problem. That would save much more  
25 time on the road and, therefore, cut the emissions more. And I

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25

1 sent an e-mail back when the -- before the ranking was  
2 completed; but since this was e-mailed, I'm not sure if it got  
3 where it should be. So, I brought another one just to be sure  
4 you have it on record.

5 MR. CLARK: Thank you.

6 (APPLAUSE).

7

8 MR. CLARK: Thank you. And then Tom will be  
9 followed by Clark Martinson.

10 MR. STANSELL: I'm Tom Stansell with the Bay  
11 Area Transportation Partnership. I chair their Long-range  
12 Transportation Committee. Here I would like to express  
13 appreciation for the opportunity to do this and for the support  
14 to my committee that's been given by both HGAC and TXDOT every  
15 time we have asked for information or support at the meetings.  
16 Y'all have always been there, and we appreciate it very much.  
17 I just had a few comments on the plan. I guess, basically, we  
18 think it's a very reasonable to take all the projects that we  
19 want and move them up to the top of the list.

20 (The audience laughs.)

21 MR. STANSELL: However, that may not be

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22 considered reasonable by other people; and looking at the plan,  
23 we think it is a very good plan overall. Just a few comments  
24 to make on it. One is on 146, we would understand that you  
25 would continue that process in a responsible manner, working

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1 with the City of Seabrook so that it has the least impact to  
2 that community. We are very interested in the Highway 30 --  
3 excuse me, Highway 3 rail study that is planned. We're very  
4 interested in seeing that plan come to completion and see if  
5 that's a feasible route and then the only other items we are  
6 very interested in storm route -- or storm evacuations for  
7 storms, and that's a very important aspect of any planning that  
8 needs to be done in transportation. We would urge very much  
9 that those particular projects be held to their current  
10 schedules or even accelerated if at all possible. Thank you.

11 MR. CLARK: And Clark, will you please come.  
12 Thank you.

13 MR. MARTINSON: My name is Clark Martinson. I  
14 am the Energy Manager for the Energy Corridor Management  
15 District. Last year on April 21st, 2004, I stood in front of  
16 the Transportation Policy Committee and presented the concerns  
17 of Harris County Improvement District Number 4, also known as  
18 the Energy Corridor Management District. We were and still are  
19 concerned about the methodology used to classify employment  
20 centers in the HGAC region and would like a chance to continue  
21 the dialog to understand how employment numbers are aggregated  
22 and what place they have in determining investment in

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23 transportation planning decisions. We welcome your explanation  
24 of how boundaries are used to define employment centers,  
25 districts and corridors and what difference it makes.

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1                   The Uptown, Memorial City, Westchase and Energy  
2 Corridor districts all would like some clarification. We want  
3 to make sure that any misunderstanding can be resolved before  
4 the 2028 RTP and the 2050 forecast. We see the trend  
5 continuing of residential and employment dispersion to smaller  
6 centers that do not fit HGAC's historical reference of an  
7 employment center. As an example, there is no "West Houston"  
8 employment center. Rather, there are multiple employment  
9 centers in West Houston, including the districts mentioned  
10 above and the newer developments at the exits of the Sam  
11 Houston Toll Road and other area freeways.

12                   Part of the problem identifying employment  
13 centers in the suburbs has to do with our density of  
14 development. The Energy Corridor includes properties located  
15 along six miles of I-10, between North Kirkwood and Barker  
16 Cypress, and along three miles of North Eldridge Parkway, north  
17 of Westheimer. The largest employment centers included Enclave  
18 Parkway, Eldridge Place, Global Santa Fe, Ashford Place,  
19 Exxon/Mobil Chemical, Westlake Park (BP), ConocoPhillips, Shell  
20 Oil and the Park 10 Regional Business Center. Density of  
21 employment for this area should not be calculated by looking at  
22 the I-10 corridor between downtown and the Brazos River.

23                   The West Houston area is forecasted in the HGAC  
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24 Draft 2025 RTP to be the fastest growing employment and  
25 residential area in the eight-county region. The majority of

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1 commuters to the Energy Corridor and surrounding employment  
2 districts commute from Katy to the west, the 1960/Champions  
3 area on the north, along I-10 from the east and from Sugar Land  
4 from the south. As defined in Appendix A, Analysis Table P,  
5 Page 43: Westchase, Energy Corridor and West Houston combine  
6 for 180,150 employees, approximately one-fifth of the  
7 employment in the 16 districts listed.

8 Congestion is caused by too many cars on too few  
9 roads in West Houston. The Addicks and Barker Reservoirs are  
10 major barrier-creating bottlenecks on the few critical through  
11 roads in the area. The only roads that completely traverse the  
12 ten-mile by ten-mile area are I-10, Clay Road and Westheimer  
13 Parkway running east/west and Eldridge Parkway and State  
14 Highway 6 running north/south.

15 Highway 6 needs to receive more attention in the  
16 RTP. It should be designated as a grade separated smart street  
17 that will function as a managed access roadway with grade  
18 separations at major intersections, similar to Allen Parkway.  
19 The Metro Addicks Park and Ride Lot and the entrance to the  
20 Harris County Toll Road Authority's future I-10 High Occupancy  
21 Toll Road are served by Highway 6 at the center of the  
22 bottleneck created by the two US Army Corps of Engineers' dams.  
23 It is critical that any improvements to Highway 6 better  
24 control access to improve traffic flow from the Northwest to

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25 the Southwest Freeways to I-10.

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1                   As part of the I-10 Reconstruction Project,  
2 TXDOT will construct Highway 6 as an overpass with round level  
3 access roads between Addicks Reservoir and Memorial Drive.  
4 TXDOT also plans to develop Highway 6, incorporating the  
5 concepts of the HGAC smart streets. This project will set the  
6 standard of transportation improvements that support new  
7 economic growth and improve the quality of life.

8                   Getting to the Energy Corridor from the inner  
9 city and the distant suburbs along tollways and freeways is  
10 important. However, more needs to be done to entice us out of  
11 our single-occupant cars and using alternative forms of  
12 transportation. This can best be achieved by organizing and  
13 promoting van pools, car pools and virtual car pool that can  
14 share rides on demand when most needed. The Energy Corridor  
15 also needs to promote existing Metro local bus service where  
16 provided to increase ridership and create better places to walk  
17 and bike for the short trip from the bus stop to one's  
18 workplace. Because bus stops may be a far walk from one's  
19 house, bike racks need to be on the buses so that those  
20 inclined to can pedal their bicycles to the bus stop, place  
21 their bikes on the bike rack, ride the bus to the stop nearest  
22 work and ride their bikes the rest of their commute.

23                   Circulation within the Energy Corridor is also  
24 important, and sidewalks and multi-use trails need to be  
25 continuous to encourage safe walking and bicycling. The RTP

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1 needs to encourage further development of a 100-mile system of  
2 hike and bike trails along West Houston and Katy neighborhood  
3 greenways and within the 26,000 acres in Bush, Cullen and Bear  
4 Creek Parks, connection to the Terry Hershey Park Hike and Bike  
5 Trails.

6                   The Energy Corridor District Board strongly  
7 encourages that HGAC recognize the Energy Corridor as the fifth  
8 largest employment center in the Houston-Galveston region. Our  
9 mobility plan is based on the elements included in the 2025  
10 RTP, such as: Freeways, tollways, smart streets, principle  
11 arterials, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and transit  
12 recommendations. We need a system of smart streets and  
13 arterials on a one-mile grid that will provide alternative  
14 routes to highways; and we need a continuous system of  
15 sidewalks and hike and bike trails that connect our homes to  
16 transit and work. I hope that HGAC will continue to include  
17 the Energy Corridor in its forecasting research so that needed  
18 transportation projects -- such as the Katy Freeway  
19 Reconstruction -- can be better incorporated with new  
20 development. Thank you.

21                   (APPLAUSE).

22                   MR. CLARK: Clark, would you like to leave your  
23 written copy for us to include in the record?

24                   MR. MARTINSON: Sure. Here you go.

25                   MR. CLARK: That was the last individual who had

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1 signed up to speak but I'd like to extend the opportunity for  
2 any who came in or who failed to indicate they wanted to sign  
3 up. Yes, sir. If you'll just come on up and give us your  
4 name. You may come up and address the audience. There you go.

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you. My name is Tom  
6 Peugeot. I live in Candlelight Oaks, and they're proposing a  
7 toll road up through our neighborhood. And it just -- I would  
8 just like to see this plan work a lot more with the  
9 neighborhoods. We're talking 80-year old neighborhoods, and  
10 they're expanding all the streets. And, you know, it's not a  
11 safe place to live anymore. So, we can move people from out of  
12 Harris County into Harris County and to work; and I have to  
13 agree with this man (indicating) that brought up, you know. In  
14 25 years from now, a lot of us that are still working will  
15 probably be working at home and I think this plan has brought  
16 up on the -- on a bad set of numbers and it just seems like,  
17 personally, and from the subdivisions -- that last night we had  
18 quite a meeting and we appreciate you coming and you came into  
19 quite a hostile environment but you know, our homes are very,  
20 very important to us and we would like to see that considered.

21 MR. CLARK: Thank you. Yes. Yes, ma'am.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you for the chance to  
23 comment. My name is Linda Mercer. I live in Cottage Grove,  
24 which is a neighborhood at TC Jester and Interstate 10, south of  
25 Candlelight Oaks. And there's a large public -- there's a

1 large right-of-way north of our neighborhood that we've been  
2 trying to find out what the plans are for it. It's in your  
3 TIP, there's a CIP attached to it and it's to expand Hempstead  
4 Highway into more lanes and then to take water from an  
5 underpass at the Union Pacific Railroad and pump that water up  
6 13 feet into our neighborhood and detain it in a new  
7 grass-lined ditch that's about a thousand feet long. That will  
8 not mitigate any flooding at all in our neighborhood. All it  
9 will do is take water off of the street.

10                   And we've been trying hard to find out what are  
11 the exact plans and what kind of influence can the public have  
12 and we have been told that whatever plans they have, that's all  
13 the plans they have -- that's all they have money for.

14                   We want to be able to do things like add trees  
15 to the plan or to perhaps give access driveway that goes the  
16 entire length of the ditch, if we want that to be converted  
17 into a bike path so it can be a linear green park from Eureka  
18 to the Heights, we've got to find money from somebody else to  
19 make those things happen. So, it's a very complicated  
20 circumstance to try to have some ability to influence a plan  
21 that's going to impact severely the neighborhood that I bought  
22 into 27 years ago when I chose to not commute anymore and not  
23 drive into the city but live in the city and be a part of the  
24 urban neighborhood.

25                   I don't know if the numbers are off about how

1 many million more people are going to be here in a couple of  
2 years; but I can tell you this: I've got 60 new neighbors on  
3 my street in the last six weeks. So, inner city Houston is  
4 doing what urban had to do and what European cities have done  
5 and that is densing up. And if we don't save some of the green  
6 space for something other than pavement and give people bike  
7 paths and hike paths and trees to blow in the breeze and to  
8 catch rain and too clean the air and to mitigate the air from  
9 the fly-overs that currently surround my neighborhood with the  
10 expansion of 610, the way it's gone, there will be a whole new  
11 population of people living in the inner city; and it won't be  
12 any of us who used to appreciate the qualities that it has.

13               So, I hope that, perhaps, HGAC could help to  
14 host an open house these topics that are on the plans for next  
15 year where I think there's about \$80 million to be spent in my  
16 neighborhood and I wish it could be spent elsewhere, but I hope  
17 that we can at least have some influence on the plan to make it  
18 make the most out of what has been public right-of-way for  
19 years and years and years.

20               (APPLAUSE).

21               AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

22               MR. CLARK: Before you leave, I just want to ask  
23 one clarifying question. The right-of-way you're speaking of,  
24 is it the rail right-of-way that you're speaking of?

25               AUDIENCE MEMBER: The old Katy right --

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1 MR. CLARK: The old Katy Freeway railroad  
2 right-of-way that's inside Loop 610.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: That's correct.

4 MR. CLARK: Thank you. I just wanted to make  
5 sure I understood so I could direct it to the right agencies.

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay.

7 MR. CLARK: Did we have another person? Yes,  
8 sir.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good evening. My name is  
10 Bernard LaGrand. I'm a neighbor of Mayor Riley. I live in La  
11 Porte/Galveston Bay. I didn't plan to comment this evening. I  
12 was just listening, and I got some -- I had a few ideas. One  
13 is more a question than anything else: Have you considered the  
14 fact that the "purple trans Texas thing" [sic] that it went  
15 into Houston, I didn't see anything mentioned; but, obviously,  
16 it happened because it's on the back. So, I think this should  
17 be seriously studied if it ever happened, but it might.

18 I've travelled a lot during my lifetime. And  
19 the last time I was in London, they've got a bad congestion  
20 problem, as we know. So, over there, what they did was just  
21 put a tax on people going downtown to the city and basically  
22 saying, you know, you don't drive in, you use the sub or  
23 whatever that is and it did -- something like that I heard that  
24 on NPR this morning, and it did make an impact on the traffic.  
25 It's moving. People are going somewhere, less pollution. The

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1 city makes money, too, by the way. It takes a few quids to do  
2 that. I wonder if you ever looked into something like that  
3 that actually works and cuts down traffic in Houston because I  
4 don't think building more highways and whatever will help as  
5 much.

6           If you build a highway, more cars will come,  
7 which is the opposite of what we want to do. I think we should  
8 put more money in public transportation, something that will do  
9 more than just prevent the traffic. Now, if you look at it  
10 this way: Trains are used all over the world, you know, small  
11 train, bigger train or whatever. In Houston, you have to  
12 realize that under ground may not be a very feasible thing,  
13 unless you like to swim.

14           So, on the other hand, putting a train on the  
15 street is not helping much. It just hogs two or three lanes.  
16 That's not helping much. Plus, it will kill people when it  
17 moves. So, I don't think that's a very good idea.

18           I seen a train in Europe use an overhead system.  
19 Those trains over there transport people. China does that,  
20 too. That's not unusual. Putting the train on the ground has  
21 been done, and that seems like a giant waste of money. I don't  
22 think it's solved much of anything.

23           Listen, to the price of oil going up, I agree  
24 partly with you what you say; but I don't think the price of  
25 oil is what's going to kill this region. The price of natural

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1 gas is what is. The chemical industry and the Gulf Coast have  
2 a huge advantage because they use chemical -- natural gas  
3 liquid, basically, not just natural gas as a chemical feed.  
4 well, with the price of gas going up, this is becoming an  
5 attractive solution. The Gulf Coast has lost their edge in the  
6 United States and overseas.

7           The reason why: Basically, you had a large  
8 concentration of petrochemicals in the Houston area with  
9 strategy decisions made in world war II when it was much easier  
10 to actually produce the product that we use in the war effort  
11 where we ship it to the west and east coast where it was sunk  
12 by the German submarines.

13           It doesn't make sense. But, in fact, the  
14 problems with that is it has got very big; but now it's  
15 injuring business. And we won't go into that.

16           But all the big plants are built overseas for  
17 basically that reason. That's where the natural resources are:  
18 oil and gas. And that's where the market is.

19           The United States has a saturated market.  
20 You're not going to make a killing on that. The buck goes much  
21 farther in China and Southeast Asia than it does here. When  
22 they're making their calculations saying 30 years from now  
23 you'll have a whole lot of people here, that may be a huge  
24 mistake. I probably will be dead by then; but, in fact, you  
25 may see the ship channel industry go away. And you already see

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1 it right now. It's happening. They're shutting down BP, and

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2 all those things shutting plants down because the markets are  
3 not there.

4 I think, in conclusion, that more roads mean one  
5 thing: That you have more heat. It reflects heat. The  
6 greener spaces -- we know that you have more noise. It's not  
7 too hard to figure. You've got much more pollution and less  
8 safety.

9 So, building more roads is not the way to go.  
10 we've got to find something else. We just about ran out of gas  
11 on that. As for the big trucks using diesel and everything  
12 lasts for a long time that's true, but you have new regulations  
13 now that say that all these big trucks, ships and locomotives  
14 that use diesel must use low sulfur diesel. So, that should  
15 help get that down but it's not going to do the trick.

16 They just have too much of that and big Mayor  
17 Riley probably knows this but a big concern where we live,  
18 where we are, you know, we live on Seabrook, La Port and around  
19 the bay is the Port of Houston. And I have attended several  
20 dock meetings about the expansion of 146 or whatever roads they  
21 are; and, really, this is not in the plan. So, you're going to  
22 have 7,000 trucks a day or something like this. On 146, right  
23 now, you can't even go anywhere after 5:00 o'clock; and it's  
24 going to be a big, big mega-mess. I probably won't get to go  
25 home for a few weeks --

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1 (The audience laughs.)

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

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(APPLAUSE).

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MR. CLARK: Okay. Do we have any other persons  
who wish to speak?

(Audience member raises hand.)

MR. CLARK: Yes, sir.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Tom Cominsky. I live in  
the woodside, area which is near Stella Link and Braeswood; and  
I just wanted to echo comments of several speakers on the  
importance of bicycle paths and bicycle routes as part of the  
solution and, in particular, continuity between existing routes  
and one of the speakers mentioned disappearing car lanes.  
well, the same things happen with bike routes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I live about five miles from  
work. I can't ride my bike to work because I not only put my  
life in my hands but in the driver's hands from where the  
routes disappear. Just as an example, the washington bike  
route kind of disappears under 610. Not only do you need to  
accommodate that as part of the new construction, but during  
construction so that they just don't get taken over by the  
construction process. So, I just wanted to stress that as part  
of the plan. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE).

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MR. CLARK: Thank you. Yes, sir. Please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Jim McKey with the white  
Oak Bayou Home Owners Association and a resident of the near

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4 northwest area, 610/290. I guess I could say we have a  
5 recurring theme this evening that seems to suggest that HGAC  
6 should take a look at its methodology at how its proposals  
7 impact established neighborhoods inside the Beltway, inside  
8 610 -- specifically, in the Oak Forest area with the proposals  
9 for the TC Jester smart street and some additional lane  
10 proposals for Antoine, Ella, 43rd. It appears that we might  
11 actually be taking what is a bicycle and pedestrian friendly  
12 area that was originally designed with people in mind and  
13 making it not people friendly. And I think that needs to be  
14 looked at more in the future.

15                   with the TC Jester smart street, that's -- that  
16 concept, I think, really needs a little better definition. We  
17 have concerns with that street along White Oak Bayou about how  
18 an expansion or a reconstruction of TC Jester may negatively  
19 impact the park space along White Oak and how it may negatively  
20 impact the water quality. It may, perhaps, increase run-off  
21 rates. As we all know, White Oak has a flooding problem.

22                   (The audience laughs.)

23                   AUDIENCE MEMBER: And we don't want to see it  
24 get worse with increased run-off rates, and I think that's it.  
25 Thank you.

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1                   MR. CLARK: Thank you.

2                   (APPLAUSE).

3                   AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good, thanks.

4                   MR. CLARK: Any other comments? Well, if not,

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5 we will conclude the formal comment part of our meeting tonight  
6 and move to the last part, which is really informal and is an  
7 opportunity for discussion with the staff here about concerns  
8 that you may have. You don't have to get up in front of the  
9 group to speak, and we have several staff persons here who'd be  
10 glad to stay after this formal piece and respond to any  
11 questions that you may have. Now, the end of our comment  
12 period -- I'm sorry.

13 (The audience laughs.)

14 MR. CLARK: I didn't think it was the end of the  
15 computer, just the comment period. But I believe the end of  
16 our comment period is at the end of this week or next week --  
17 when is it?

18 STAFF MEMBER: April the 1st.

19 STAFF MEMBER: April Fools day. I guess there's  
20 a comment there.

21 MR. CLARK: So, I guess -- so, you can submit  
22 comments both by e-mail and written mail. I wanted to tell you  
23 what happens with your comments because many, I know, express  
24 concern an frustration, perhaps, that these don't -- nothing  
25 happens after they made their comment. Did -- first of all,

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1 the comments at tonight's meeting will be placed on our  
2 website; and we will have with those a response when it's  
3 appropriate to respond. In other words, if someone tonight  
4 came and made a question about something or sought information.  
5 we will include that. we will also forward

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6 those comments to appropriate agencies. So, if someone, again,  
7 came tonight expressing a concern or comment about an action  
8 that would be of the state or city or other local government or  
9 transportation agency, we'll provide that, as well. And then  
10 for us, most importantly, these comments will be provided to  
11 our Transportation Policy Council members prior to their taking  
12 any action on our plan and on the TIP.

13 We won't -- we won't just get rid of your  
14 comments after that, however. I believe we are retaining these  
15 public comments because our process continues. Many came  
16 tonight expressing concern about how projects are going to be  
17 implemented in some particular way. So, even though our plan  
18 does not get into lots of the details, it is important that we  
19 retain your comments. Because if those projects or ideas are  
20 moved forward, they become an important piece of information to  
21 how that project should be moved forward if it is moved  
22 forward.

23 And as you -- as we say in the plan document,  
24 many things that have been identified in the long-range portion  
25 of that plan, the only appropriate next activity is further

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1 planning work because it needs to be -- we need to define what  
2 that project's scope is, what the need that's being addressed  
3 is, what the potential impacts are, before we move further into  
4 any stages of development. I want to thank you for your  
5 attendance here this evening. I very much value your comments  
6 and I look forward to being able to work with you and we'll be

7 available for conversation with you after we now conclude.  
8 Thank you. Again.  
9 (APPLAUSE).  
10 (The meeting ends at 7:26 p.m.)  
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATION  
2 TO THE PUBLIC MEETING ON  
3 THE 2025 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
4 MARCH 30, 2005  
5 I, Mary Kathryn Piper, Certified Shorthand  
6 Reporter in and for the State of Texas, hereby certify that the  
7 facts stated by me in the caption hereof are true; that I did,

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8 in shorthand, report said pages contain a full, true and  
9 correct computer-aided transcription of my shorthand notes  
10 taken on said occasion.

11 I further certify that I am not in any capacity a  
12 regular employee of the party in whose behalf this meeting is  
13 taken, nor in the regular employ of any party or attorney of  
14 record; and I certify that I am not interested in the cause,  
15 nor a kin or council to either of the parties.

16 witness my hand this the 8th day of April, 2005.

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Mary Kathryn Piper, Texas CSR 8147  
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