

## **TPC Public Comments March 25, 2021**

### **Comment 1:**

I am requesting the HGAC TPC heed the proceedings of Harris County's lawsuit and the US Department of Transportation's Title XI investigation and begin taking bold action to reshape the NHHIP. For years, public opposition of TXDOT's design has grown, and now Harris County and USDOT have acted on the will of the people. It is time for the HGAC TPC to do the same. Throughout the development process, TXDOT has not acted in good faith. TXDOT has not listened to stakeholders at the county, city, or community level. TXDOT has provided veiled, ambiguous promises of "refinement" yet implemented few if any of the design considerations the public has raised from the DEIS to the FEIS. Additionally, following the TPC tabling negotiations with TXDOT during the January meeting, TXDOT released the Record of Decision for the NHHIP anyway.

I implore the TPC to work swiftly in advance of any outcomes from Harris County's lawsuit and the Title XI investigation from USDOT. Reconceive the project entirely: incorporate findings from TXDOT's own "2014 I-45/Hardy Corridor Study" and "HGAC's 2020 Ports Area Mobility Study" that advocate for less vehicles funneled through downtown Houston. Value the transportation needs of the communities surrounding the project area. According to the American Community Survey, sponsored by the US Census Bureau, the neighborhoods adjacent to Segments 1 and 2, particularly Independence Heights, Near Northside, and Northline have some of the highest percentages of households without a car in the region. In much of these neighborhoods, the percentage of households without a car is upwards of 20% and is as high as 39%. I implore the TPC to direct TXDOT to design this highway with everyone in mind: provide robust regional transit for suburban commuters, frequent localized transit for adjacent neighborhoods, and bicycle, pedestrian, and low speed limit neighborhood connectivity, all within the existing right of way footprint.

Allowing this project to proceed as designed would be a devastating blow to our urban core, the life giver of our entire region. Expanding the freeway acts in direct opposition to reducing vehicle fatalities in this state. Expanding this freeway will leave communities broken, give more kids asthma, and will make Houston the laughingstock of the modern world. The good news is we have time and leverage to demand a better designed project. It is not too late to save our city, and our region.

I know there are multiple engineers on this council. Engineers are bound by the principles of science and ethics to design for efficiency and safety with available data. Auto dependency is not efficient, expanding the right of way is not efficient nor is it ethical, and wasted asphalt is not efficient. Build a new I-45 that addresses the needs of I-45 users near and far with an emphasis

on increasing safer transit options. You are public servants, please act as the public has been asking.

Michael Moritz, Houstonian

## **Comment 2:**

1. I do not think it is in the best interest of the TPC to accept any agreement with TXDOT over the NHHIP until it has a new understanding with the USDOT, and lawsuits with Harris County and Pct. One of said county.

2. Last Sunday, there was an announcement about the Canadian Pacific Railroad purchasing the Kansas City Southern Railroad.

The KCS uses trackage rights over the Union Pacific between Rosenberg and Beaumont. If this merger diverts traffic from the UP lines along I35 and/or the route via Flatonia TX, could the Houston rail terminal absorb the traffic? Rail congestion could increase wait times for highway-rail crossings, slowing down road traffic, including METRO, Harris County Transit, and Ft. Bend Transit. Amtrak's SUNSET LTD also could be affected.

There has been talk about rerouting rail traffic on the UP Houston Terminal Subdivision. Current plans do not include this merger. Reroutes could need extra trackage and/or signaling.

So, I think we now have a brand-new stakeholder in the NHHIP: The Surface Transportation Board. The "Surfboard" replaced the Interstate Commerce Commission and is in charge of rail mergers.

I would suggest the TPC, and all interested parties keep well advised, and comment to the proper authorities.

Dominic Mazoch