



6915 ANTOINE, SUITE E
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77091
713-683-6363

P.O. BOX 2910
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768-2910
512-463-0554

State of Texas
House of Representatives
SYLVESTER TURNER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

January 8, 2015

Mr. Michael Johnsen
Lead Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, MS-20
Washington, D.C. 20590

Via Email: Michael.johnsen@dot.gov

Re: Texas Central Railway/Federal Railroad Administration EIS Scoping Comments

Dear Mr. Johnsen:

Over the past several months, there has been a great deal of discussion regarding the proposed Dallas-Houston High Speed Rail project by the Texas Central Railway. Like many people in Texas and particularly in the Houston and Harris County Region, we recognize the importance of transportation and the development and enhancement of multi-modal forms of transportation. Congestion is a major issue and navigating through the various forms of security at the airports can be very time consuming. When Texas Central Railway proposed the construction of the high speed train without any reliance on government funding, many people including myself responded very positively.

As the State Representative of District 139 which includes Northwest Houston and specifically Oak Forest, Independence Heights and the Inwood areas which would be directly affected by the proposed routes, I am deeply concerned that the adverse impact to all of these neighborhoods would negate the benefits of the high speed train going to downtown Houston. The character of these neighborhoods would be destroyed. Furthermore, the safety of families in these dense urban areas would be compromised, property values would decline, and in these very neighborhoods where homes are being built and neighborhoods revitalized, the progress may very well be halted. Already, some prospective homeowners are delaying their decisions to purchase property in the area uncertain of the route that the high speed train may take.

I support the construction of the high speed train. I applaud Texas Central Railway in putting forth their plan without government financial assistance. I commend Robert Eckels for taking the time to answer the public's questions, soliciting their input and considering alternatives.

At the same time, I would strongly recommend that all parties concerned and all stakeholders consider locating the route along I-45 to downtown or I-45 to Hardy or Hardy itself, utilizing I-10 which has recently been expanded, or developing the property at 290 @ 610 (Northwest Mall) as a Northwest Transit Center which could lead to further development and revitalization for that area. The development of the Northwest Transit Center could be a joint project between the City of Houston, Metro, Texas Central Railway and others. I strongly recommend all stakeholders consider the Northwest Transit Center in its decision making. The suggestions listed above would avoid the disruption of major neighborhoods and would be consistent with the area's mobility plans, reducing congestion, promoting the development of homeowners living in the inner city, and would be a "win win" between homeowners and developers.

I fully recognize that a large scale project of this magnitude will always generate some opposition. Even with the suggestions offered above, there will still be some who oppose this project. However, I firmly believe these suggestions are far better than what is currently offered and would garner my support as well as many others.

It is clear that the routes as currently proposed make this project totally unacceptable. I join with Super Neighborhood #22 and Super Neighborhood #12 in their opposition to the proposed routes and I incorporate their comments as well. I encourage you to consider other options and I am prepared to work with you to make this project a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvester Turner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Rep. Sylvester Turner
District 139
Houston, Texas*

CC: Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee
Congressman Al Green
Congressman Gene Green