

SUPERNEIGHBORHOOD 22

WASHINGTON AVENUE COALITION - MEMORIAL PARK

May 30, 2015

RE: IH45 Houston Highway Improvement Project

The Washington Avenue Coalition / Memorial Park Superneighborhood Council (SN22) submits this letter of comment reflecting community input about this project.

SN22 has been consistently represented at the IH45 scoping meetings and has previously submitted comments as the project has developed. We commend TxDOT for its consideration of stakeholder responses and appreciate the work that's been done to produce a design solution that is acceptable to the neighboring communities.

We are supportive of comments and agree with suggestions presented by the First Ward Civic Council, representing the largest of our constituent neighborhoods abutting the IH45 corridor. We strongly agree that Houston Avenue should remain a two-way street with improved connectivity to IH45 North and South.

It is also our shared position that re-built bridges must be designed to safely accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic, that those bridge designs should reflect the character and enhance the identify of the neighborhoods they connect, and that any existing or planned bike/ped trail projects within the IH45 work zone be preserved, restored, and in no way diminished by this construction.

The SN22 Council recognizes a need to retain connectivity to and from Memorial Drive into IH45 North and South which the current design plan iteration has eliminated. Much of the inner West Loop area depends on Memorial Drive as an alternate to IH10. If connectivity to IH45 North and South via Memorial Drive is lost, residents of the area will surely be worsening the existing congestion on IH10, 610 and 59.

We have also collaborated with the IH45 Coalition since its inception and urge TxDOT to heed recommendations presented by that group and respond to resolve concerns they've presented, including requests that new roadway construction be constrained to existing rights of way.

The SN22 Council urges re-consideration of the intent to leave un-capped the segments of the project designed to be routed below grade. All basic structural support required to complete capping and green space conversions should be completed by TxDOT during the road building process. It will be prohibitively costly and disruptive to active traffic for another agency to place structural and mechanical elements required for capping after initial construction is completed and the roadway is operational.

The SN22 Council enthusiastically supports the preservation of portions of the Pierce Elevated for conversion to active green space and use for alternate transportation modes. Additionally, we urge TxDOT to exercise care and diligence when working in our sensitive bayou environment, and to assure that no damage is done to Buffalo Bayou Park improvements already in place.

Lastly, we encourage TxDOT to work collaboratively with other agencies in order to incorporate and facilitate plans that may be underway to provide greater accessibility via regional public transportation options.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to comment,



Tom Dornbusch
SN 22 Council, President