

# **Website Comments**

## opinions as a driver...

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**From:** bryan bagley <wbryanbagley@gmail.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 11-02-2011 09:53 AM

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Build upwards and not outwards. Use the space of the existing HOV lane to build supports for an elevated roadway. Limited access/exits for express lanes would be better than an HOV lane you have to exit the freeway to access. This would also allow it to extend beyond Beltway 8. Prohibit trucks and trailers (18 wheelers) and have at least two lanes north and two lanes south. Entry and exit could be staggered because they are "express" lanes.

PLEASE... No tunnel. This is the Bayou City and remember tropical storm Allison.

Also, the 45 exit lanes to 59 south freeway needs to be slightly reworked. Currently the exit remains two lanes when it merges with 59 south. One lane from the exit and one lane from 59 merge together and always slows traffic. I think it is more logical to have the two lanes of the 45 exit merge together just before the merger with 59 South. This would not negatively impact the traffic traveling on 59 South and would remove one bottleneck from the freeway. The existing bottleneck would be moved to affect the exit from 45 only.

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W. Bryan Bagley

## Comment on expanding any freeway

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**From:** "trodriguez@rslfundingllc.com" <trodriguez@rslfundingllc.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 11-02-2011 11:52 AM

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Just wanting to state my opinion,

Is it not better that instead of widening the freeways, they be sort of like a 2 story freeway. Building another part on top of the current one. Maybe all 18 wheelers can be on top and regular traffic on bottom or whatever it takes. Whenever there's an exit, there can be a merging lane with the top portion and bottom portion to exit or any other form.

I strongly agree with the crowd that does not like the freeways widening. I understand it's a need and not a want but maybe this option I think about would be a better alternative to expanding the freeways and helping the congestion.

Thanks for taking time in reading my opinion/comment.

Thomas Rodriguez

RSL Funding, LLC

1980 Post Oak Blvd., Two Post Oak Central, Suite 1975, Houston, TX 77056

(877) 850-5600; Fax: (877) 850-8700

## timing

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**From:** Stacie Hohmann <Stacie.hohmann@kbr.com>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 11-17-2011 01:55 PM

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The expansion of I45 just north of downtown should be timed as closely as possible to the Hardy extension into downtown to alleviate the traffic that will become a nightmare on the Pierce Elevated if the Hardy extension isn't complete.

Thank you,

Stacie Hohmann

Technical Professional - Process

KBR Technology

601 Jefferson Ave. , KT-439C

Houston , TX 77002

Phone: (713)753-7603      (713)753-7603

Email: [stacie.hohmann@kbr.com](mailto:stacie.hohmann@kbr.com)

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## Expanding Houston's Freeways

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**From:** Jonathan Roque <jon\_roque@live.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 11-17-2011 01:31 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I wrote this letter to start an idea that may or may not have been proposed. I've been thinking about this for a while and I thought I would share it with you.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Roque

### Expanding Houston's Freeways

Has Houston ever considered Direct Access Freeways using a Two Tier Freeway system? I believe San Antonio and Austin have both implemented similar ideas. This could resolve the situation with concerns about widening the freeway while maintaining the ultimate purpose of adding additional lanes. In addition; if this idea was implemented, the second level of the highway could have limited exits/entrances which would ultimately reduce traffic by allowing commuters from downtown with long drives to avoid the traffic caused by motorist exiting and entering. This would also alleviate high congestion on the first level allowing more motorists to exit and enter freeways smoother and therefore faster.

I hope Houston adopts this idea one day. We will one day be forced to utilize a Two Tier Freeway system. Houston's population is increasing and there is a certain distance that people are willing to drive to get to and from work on a daily basis. This will cause the great city of Houston to become densely populated within the two loops. Developing Direct Access Freeway and Two Tier Freeway systems would greatly reduce traffic. This idea should have first been implemented on 610 (the perfect freeway for such an idea), especially around the Galleria area were the greatest amount of motorist exit and enter the freeway). Imagine the time saved by having Direct Access Freeways using a Two Tier Freeway system for the following freeways:

- I10 to 59
- 59 to I10

And/or

- 610 near 290 to 59 and possibly The Galleria\*
- 59 to a fork exit for 290 and 610

\* An exit/entrance could be added to either Westheimer or San Felipe, since the Galleria is such a densely populated area.

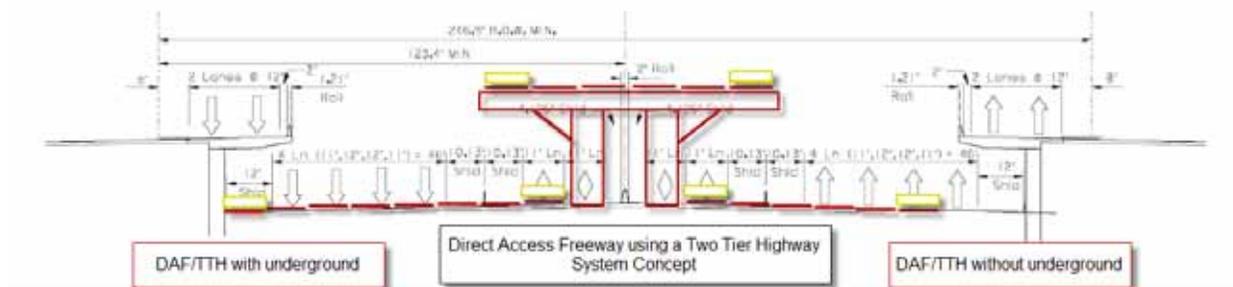
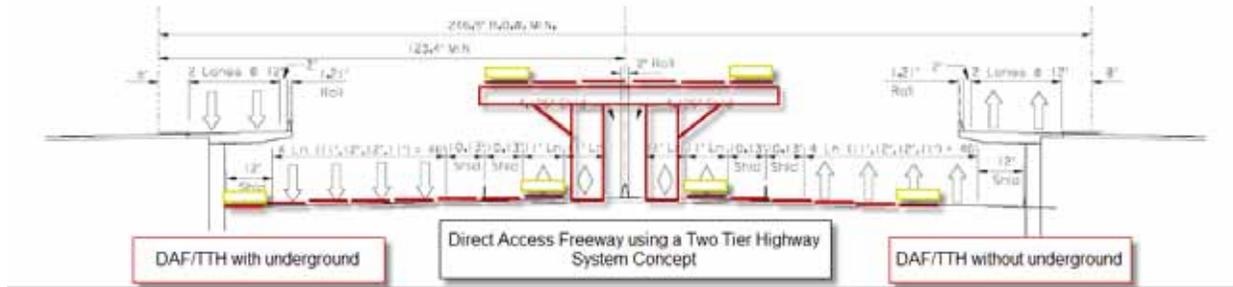
Another area that needs major improvement is 59 near and at Downtown. This Direct Access Freeway and Two Tier Freeway system should have been planned throughout the entire city before the following engineering and/or construction was completed or started:

- Spur 527
- 610 Loop
- I10 at 610
- Future 290 expansion
- Proposed I45 expansion
- And Downtown Freeway Access Points

Houston should consider this for the next round of improvements for Houston. The implementation of a Direct Access Freeway and Two Tier Freeway system would be perfect for Houston; solving traffic congestion and ensuring we are proactive in handling traffic as our population increases. Especially knowing advancements in concrete and freeway engineering have increased the lifespan of our freeways.

I understand Civil Engineering is complex and that there are many variables to consider when building freeways in highly populated cities. With that being said, if you made it this far thanks for reading!

Jonathan Roque



## highway 45 expansion

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**From:** Scott and Thalmann <thalmann@swbell.net>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 11-18-2011 12:05 PM

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A husband and wife team of accomplished scientists was recently recruited to Houston [Baylor College of Medicine] from prestigious Universities in the East.

They were attracted to and chose to buy a home in the Heights.

The Heights, which this project will impact, is a pleasurable resource for us and indeed all Houstonians and it is an attraction for many of the people we would like to attract to Houston. It is unique in Houston.

If this project compromises this unique resource it will be at great cost to our City.

Don't mess with the Heights.

Robert Thalmann  
4025 Amherst St  
Houston 77005

## Why not commuter rail?

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**From:** clint acree <clintacree@gmail.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date:** 11-21-2011 12:48 AM

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Commuter rail seems like a better long term solution. Expanded freeways will need further expansions in a decade or two.

## North Houston Highway Improvement Project - Comments

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**From:** "Lenz, Paula" <Paula.Lenz@north-houston.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 11-22-2011 03:10 PM

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--> <!--[if mso 9]--> <!--[endif]-->

After having reviewed the Draft Need and Purpose for the NHHIP, I certainly concur with all the information provided.

The North Houston Association office is located at IH 45 and Beltway 8. During business hours, I NEVER take the segment of IH 45 south to Loop 610 for the following reasons:

- <!--[if !supportLists]--> • <!--[endif]--> **Too congested – takes at least 25 minutes to travel IH 45 south from Beltway 8 to Loop 610; much longer time travel if there is an accident.**
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> • <!--[endif]--> **Too many wrecks – so much weaving in and out at various junctures of this freeway.**
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> • <!--[endif]--> **Too dangerous – no shoulders available in many places.**

Regarding Hurricane Evacuation – I would never get near this freeway to use for evacuation! Cannot provide adequate capacity.

Instead of driving IH 45 south, I take the Hardy Toll Road instead. The Toll Road definitely needs to be extended to downtown and additional capacity added to existing segment of Hardy Toll Road.

The NHHIP Draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan provides the appropriate means for meaningful outreach.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

**Paula Lenz, Executive Director**

**North Houston Association**

**281.875.0660**



## **objection to i-45 expansion**

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**From:** jaime <jaime85@gmail.com>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 11-28-2011 11:08 PM

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To whom it may concern:

I own land along I-45 near downtown. I bought freeway frontage for my business. I object to all forms of expansion of I-45.

-Jaime Martinez

## Citizen comments about plans for IH45 north expansion

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**From:** Joseph Norton <joenorton15@gmail.com>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Cc:** Julie Norton <julienorton15@gmail.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 11-28-2011 04:43 PM

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I own property adjacent to Woodland Park (on Parkview Street) and I plan to build a home there.

The freeway noise is the biggest downside to living in that area, so my biggest priority is to come up with solutions that make the area quieter. (Less road noise from IH45)

I was told or I read (although I do not remember the source) that it has been decided that there will be no right of way expansion between Cavalcade and Quitman. If that is true, it is good news, but I would also like to say that reducing existing noise would be good for the entire area (quality of life, property values, park enjoyment, etc.). Please make noise reduction a very high priority.

I have also heard that an underground freeway is being considered. I think that would be great if it can be done in a way that will reduce the road noise.

I have also heard that elevated cantilevered access roads are being considered. My opinion is that this would be OK if the noise will be reduced too.

Some of my neighbors have suggested using earthen berms for noise abatement. I think this is a good idea for many reasons. 1) A berm is very easy to repair compared to concrete sound walls I have seen. 2) Graffiti and tagging will not be problems with earthen berms. 3) Earthen berms are natural and environmentally friendly.

So; in summary;

- I understand the need and support the plan (if done properly) to expand the IH45 freeway.
- I believe that noise abatement must be the most important consideration because it will make the quality of life better for everyone.
- I would like to know if and how noise abatement will be handled during this project.

Thank you,

Joe Norton

126 North Street, Houston, TX 77009

Phone: 281-955-1337

## **i45 expansion protest**

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**From:** Nathan Watkins <npwatkins@gmail.com>

**To:** comments@IH45NorthandMore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 11-28-2011 11:10 PM

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To whom it may concern:

I cannot agree to unspecified plans for the expansion of IH 45 North from the US 59/SH 288 interchange to Beltway 8 North, the Hardy Toll Road from IH 610 North Loop to Beltway 8 North, as well as portions of IH 10, US 59 and SH 288 near downtown Houston .

I, therefore, object to the expansion .

-Nathan Watkins

## comments on North Houston Highway Improvement Project

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**From:** SMS <smstrawn@gmail.com>  
**To:** comments@IH45NorthandMore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-02-2011 09:52 AM

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Good morning,

In comparing the proposals for the I-45 expansion to the recent improvements of 59 south and I-10 west, it's interesting to see what lessons have or haven't been learned.

Lengthy swaths of 59 were improved by placing the roadway below grade. Not so in the case of the I-45 proposals, even though expansion of 45 would lead to a much bigger expressway right on the verge of a historic neighborhood and school, Woodland Heights and Travis Elementary. Though some of the planning documents mention the possibility of a tunnel for I-45 just north of downtown and downtown, neither the Need & Purpose Statement nor the Agency Coordination & Public Involvement Plan do. In the case of the I-10 expansion, opportunities for commuter rail were dismissed, only to resurface as a possibility to alleviate traffic along 290.

Given that projected savings in drive times historically have been markedly overestimated in most if not all highway expansion projects, this would seem to be the ideal time to implement alternatives such as commuter rail along the Hardy corridor and more express buses. Not expanding the I-45 right of way beyond what it is now would protect Houston neighborhoods and would encourage individuals to explore alternatives. Converting more Hardy lanes to free HOV lanes and extending the Hardy tollway from 610 to downtown not only would relieve I-45 traffic, but also 610 traffic (and would seem to merit the same consideration as the plans to free the 290 terminus from 610).

Here are the points I would like to see reflected in any plans for north Houston highway improvements:

- no expansion of right of way along I-45
- no double-decked expressways
- maximum use of alternative transportation
- extension and development of the Hardy expressway from 610 to downtown

Sincerely,

Sabrina Strawn  
713-805-3862      713-805-3862      mobile  
SIRE instructor and volunteer coordinator

**The **MISSION** of SIRE is to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities through therapeutic horseback riding and related activities.**  
[www.sire-htec.org](http://www.sire-htec.org)

*When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes. ~William Shakespeare, Henry V*

## Expanding I-45 inside the loop

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**From:** Maureen Hall <mern721@sbcglobal.net>

**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 12-04-2011 07:30 PM

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Please leave our older neighborhoods intact! Consider the tunnel idea, which may be a higher cost monetarily but losing more of our historic neighborhoods is a higher moral cost. Houston needs to respect it's roots more, not pave over the center for the sake of mobility for the suburbs...

Maureen Hall  
Heights resident since 1981

Sent from my iPad

## I-45 Improvement Project - Comments

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**From:** Evan Michaelides <evanmichaelides@sbcglobal.net>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-04-2011 11:04 PM

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Thanks for the opportunity to attend the informational meeting last month. I am a resident and homeowner in the I-45 corridor, and would like to comment as follows.

1. I note your commitment not to take additional right-of-way between 610 and Quitman and believe it is very important this commitment be kept.
2. I am not sure I understand the stated exception to this commitment to the effect that some ROW might be needed at intersections with existing streets. For much of this stretch of I-45, the roadway is below grade, so the roadway really has no intersections with existing streets at all.
3. Alternative means of transportation should be explored, such as adding commuter rail on the existing rail line in the Hardy Toll Road corridor. This should be done in coordination with Metro.
4. A tunnel should be considered for the I-45 managed lanes and/or general traffic lanes. The presentation provided states that tunnels will be considered, but the N&P and ACPIP don't mention that tunnels are under consideration.
5. Drainage issues need to be considered in whatever is done; we already have drainage problems in Houston and this project must not make them worse.
6. The N&P states a goal of improving peak hour travel speeds by "up to 10 mph". This is too vague; under this goal, achieving an increase of 1 mph could be considered as having attained the objective. Instead, the goal should be stated as "at least X mph". This is essential so that the benefits can be accurately assessed and weighed against the costs.

Thanks,  
Evan Michaelides

## I-45

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**From:** Robert Muhammad <robertsmuhammad@me.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-04-2011 10:15 PM

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Dear Tex Dot

Expansion of I-45 will have limited value and utility. Please create a transit corridor using the right of way for mass transit options. Thank you.

Robert S. Muhammad  
Equity is the basis of sustainable development

[www.NTEPlanning.com](http://www.NTEPlanning.com)  
[Twitter.com/NTEPlanning](https://twitter.com/NTEPlanning)  
[Facebook.com/NTEPlanning](https://facebook.com/NTEPlanning)

## I45 widening....NO

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**From:** "Covington, Karen" <Karen.Covington@dignitymemorial.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Very high  
**Date** 12-05-2011 02:40 PM

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I have been homeowner in the Heights since 1997 and I never thought I would see the day when a Walmart would raise its ugly head in our historic neighborhood. I am very opposed to widening 1-45 and do not want a Walmart in my neighborhood.

Regards,

Karen

*Karen Covington*

*Director, Corporate Communications*

*Service Corporation International*

1929 Allen Parkway

Houston, Texas 77008

713-525-9772 office

713-927-1724 mobile

## Public Comments from State Representative Jessica Farrar

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**From:** Jessica Farrar <Jessica.Farrar@house.state.tx.us>  
**To:** "comments@IH45NorthandMore.com" <comments@IH45NorthandMore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 03:35 PM

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December 5, 2011

Director of Project Development

Texas Department of Transportation

P.O. Box 1386

Houston, TX 77251

Re: Public Comments on North Houston Highway Improvement Project

Director:

After review of the information provided at the November 15, 2011 Public Scoping Meeting, please review the following public comments:

if !supportLists--> 1. <!--[endif]--> TxDOT's commitment to remain within the current I-45 right-of-way between Cavalcade and Quitman Streets, with the exception of intersections is promising. Of concern is the possibility that TxDOT will design a project requiring significant acquisition of right-of-way along other stretches of the project. Hopefully TxDOT will explore creative options to increase capacity without acquiring additional right-of-way.

<!--[if !supportLists]--> a. <!--[endif]--> Of specific concern are high-density neighborhoods including the Northside, Lindale, North Lindale, First Ward, the Woodland Heights, and Brooke Smith. Acquisition of right-of-way in these neighborhoods will cause the loss of homes, businesses, and neighborhood resources.

if !supportLists--> 2. <!--[endif]--> TxDOT's exploration of a tunnel option is promising. Properly constructed tunnels do not pose a threat of flooding. Pumps and other technologies can be successfully administered to keep tunnels clear of water during large rainstorms and in the event of a hurricane, when I-45 will be used as an evacuation route for Houstonians. Additionally, the current section of I-45 that depresses at North Main floods in current conditions, creating a concern for flooding conditions if the interstate is expanded to include more depressions.

if !supportLists--> 3. <!--[endif]--> TxDOT's further exploration of use of the Hardy Toll Road to mitigate traffic from I-45 is promising. More room for right-of-way acquisition exists without disrupting neighborhoods around the Hardy Toll Road than there is around I-45 between 59 and 290.

if !supportLists--> 4. <!--[endif]--> Several issues should be addressed in upcoming public meetings and in the Environmental Impact Statement:

- <!--[if !supportLists]--> a. <!--[endif]--> In the event of additional acquisition of right-of-way, how many people will be displaced from their homes? How will this affect historic neighborhoods? Will historically significant homes or buildings be demolished? Will long-time residents of these neighborhoods be left with a neighborhood that is better or worse than it is today in terms of historical significance, property values, and air quality?
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> b. <!--[endif]--> If a double-decker road is explored as an option, how will noise and air pollution be affected? Will the property values for neighborhood homes be negatively affected?
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> c. <!--[endif]--> What types of noise mitigation will be offered? Will traditional noise walls be the only option? Will pavements that absorb sound be explored? Are there other options for noise mitigation?
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> d. <!--[endif]--> More detention will be needed for expansion. What type of detention will TxDOT use and where will it be located? If detention ponds are used, will they be constructed with semi-permeable bottoms? Will they be park-ready, including trees and grass as opposed to concrete?
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> e. <!--[endif]--> Though a need for increased capacity exists on I-45, increased capacity also creates increased air pollution. How will this air pollution and particulate matter affect residents surrounding the interstate?

As always, I am available for questions or comments. Please contact my District Director, Sarah Melecki, at 713-691-6912            713-691-6912    or [sarah.melecki@house.state.tx.us](mailto:sarah.melecki@house.state.tx.us).

Respectfully,



Jessica Farrar

State Representative

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**JESSICA FARRAR**  
DISTRICT 148

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HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

COMMITTEES:  
BORDER AND  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION  
VICE-CHAIR

December 5, 2011

Director of Project Development  
Texas Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 1386  
Houston, TX 77251

Re: Public Comments on North Houston Highway Improvement Project

Director:

After review of the information provided at the November 15, 2011 Public Scoping Meeting, please review the following public comments:

1. TxDOT's commitment to remain within the current I-45 right-of-way between Cavalcade and Quitman Streets, with the exception of intersections is promising. Of concern is the possibility that TxDOT will design a project requiring significant acquisition of right-of-way along other stretches of the project. Hopefully TxDOT will explore creative options to increase capacity without acquiring additional right-of-way.
  - a. Of specific concern are high-density neighborhoods including the Northside, Lindale, North Lindale, First Ward, the Woodland Heights, and Brooke Smith. Acquisition of right-of-way in these neighborhoods will cause the loss of homes, businesses, and neighborhood resources.
2. TxDOT's exploration of a tunnel option is promising. Properly constructed tunnels do not pose a threat of flooding. Pumps and other technologies can be successfully administered to keep tunnels clear of water during large rainstorms and in the event of a hurricane, when I-45 will be used as an evacuation route for Houstonians. Additionally, the current section of I-45 that depresses at North Main floods in current conditions, creating a concern for flooding conditions if the interstate is expanded to include more depressions.
3. TxDOT's further exploration of use of the Hardy Toll Road to mitigate traffic from I-45 is promising. More room for right-of-way acquisition exists without disrupting neighborhoods around the Hardy Toll Road than there is around I-45 between 59 and 290.
4. Several issues should be addressed in upcoming public meetings and in the Environmental Impact Statement:
  - a. In the event of additional acquisition of right-of-way, how many people will be displaced from their homes? How will this affect historic neighborhoods? Will

historically significant homes or buildings be demolished? Will long-time residents of these neighborhoods be left with a neighborhood that is better or worse than it is today in terms of historical significance, property values, and air quality?

- b. If a double-decker road is explored as an option, how will noise and air pollution be affected? Will the property values for neighborhood homes be negatively affected?
- c. What types of noise mitigation will be offered? Will traditional noise walls be the only option? Will pavements that absorb sound be explored? Are there other options for noise mitigation?
- d. More detention will be needed for expansion. What type of detention will TxDOT use and where will it be located? If detention ponds are used, will they be constructed with semi-permeable bottoms? Will they be park-ready, including trees and grass as opposed to concrete?
- e. Though a need for increased capacity exists on I-45, increased capacity also creates increased air pollution. How will this air pollution and particulate matter affect residents surrounding the interstate?

As always, I am available for questions or comments. Please contact my District Director, Sarah Melecki, at 713-691-6912 or [sarah.melecki@house.state.tx.us](mailto:sarah.melecki@house.state.tx.us).

Respectfully,



Jessica Farrar  
State Representative

## I-45 Expansion comment

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**From:** Steve/Beth Fischer <beau3015@gmail.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date:** 12-05-2011 09:09 AM

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I would like to express my concern regarding the expansion of I-45 North. I am a resident of Woodland Heights and live on Morrison St. located about 2 blocks west from an I-45 North on-ramp. I oppose the expansion of I-45 North by the acquisition of more property for several reasons. To begin I do not want the existing right of way of the freeway to be any larger than it is now. That would mean excess noise levels that are unacceptable. I also oppose the expansion because I think that the site of Woodland Park would be in jeopardy of being significantly reduced in size if not completely removed. The park is currently undergoing efforts to improve that park and retain its historic significance to the city as the second oldest park in the city. I also oppose the expansion of the freeway because of the massive price tag of a proposed 2 billion dollars to increase the commute from the north end of the city by only 3 mph!! In my opinion, not at all a good use of tax payer money!!

I want TXDOT to consider other options including better use of the Hardy Toll Road corridor and/or the construction of a tunnel within the existing right of way of I-45 North. Pouring more concrete to solve this problem is not the way I want TXDOT to move forward with this.

Thank you,  
Beth Fischer

## I-45 North expansion

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**From:** Steve Fischer <sfischer@ballardexpl.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date** 12-05-2011 09:43 AM

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Friends,

Please note that I'm VERY concerned about the possibility of I-45N being expanded between I-10 and 610. This expansion would have a very negative impact on the historic Woodland Heights neighborhood. Please consider alternatives to widening I-45N such as the tunnel concept or extending the Hardy corridor.

The strong sense of community in the Woodland Heights, including the recent resurgence of the historic Woodland Park through the hard work of the Friends of Woodland Park ( [friendsofwoodlandpark.org](http://friendsofwoodlandpark.org) ), is a huge asset to the beauty of living in Houston and this expansion project would destroy it.

Thanks,  
Steve Fischer  
3015 Morrison  
77009

## comments on I-45

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**From:** Ann Herbage <herbs@hal-pc.org>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 08:12 PM

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I live very close to I-45 and am effected by the pollution and noise ... please help.

1. Please do not expand the existing right-of-way on I-45 – do not expand the R.O.W. and take any homes or businesses.
2. Please explore alternative means of transportation – instead of continuing to pour more & more concrete – investigate higher density modes of transportation.; such as adding commuter rail on the existing rails in the Hardy Corridor ☐
3. Do NOT have separate diamond lanes – have diamond lanes that can be used for general traffic. They can be restricted during peak times – but we need to use them at all times ☐
4. Whatever TxDOT does – do not negatively affect the quality of life of neighborhoods that are adjacent to IH-45 – that means no increase in noise (hopefully a reduction of noise would be possible); no increase in visual ‘blight’ and no decrease in air quality. ☐
5. I want a tunnel to be considered for the 4 managed lanes ☐
6. I want a tunnel to be considered for general traffic lanes ☐
7. I do NOT want any new roadway built above ground level – no double decked freeways because of additional noise, pollution & visual blight ☐
8. I do NOT want any roadway to negatively affect water drainage into or out of our neighborhoods at any time, including during construction ☐
9. As a possible alternative – extend Hardy from 610 to downtown; widen Hardy; have TxDOT acquire Hardy and then remove all tolls.
10. Another variation to #9 above is to maintain some lanes on Hardy as HOV / toll lanes and the rest for general traffic mobility ☐
11. In addition to #9 & #10 – coordinate with Metro and rail owners and extend light rail / commuter rail on existing rail tracks already on Hardy ☐
12. Replace and/or supplement Pierce Elevated with a tunnel system ☐
13. There is a conflict between the slide presentation and the Draft Need & Purpose (N & P) and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan (ACPIP). The presentation states that TxDOT will evaluate tunnels as an alternative and neither the N & P draft nor the ACP/IP says that will be done. In fact, neither document mentions a tunnel at all. ☐
14. The N & P states a goal of improving mobility by increasing peak hour travel speeds “by up to 10 mph” (page 1-9, 1.2). Under this ‘goal’, an increase of only 1 mph could be claimed as meeting the objective. We need better, more definitive goals other than increasing

travel speeds by as little as 1 mph in return for spending billions of dollars!

Τηλεκσφορψουρ ηελπ.□□□□□□□□□□□□ Ανν Ηερβαγε, 1520 Χεντερ Στ., 77007.□□□□□

## Comments regarding North Houston Highway Improvement Project - IH45

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**From:** jim <vm@airmail.net>  
**To:** piowebmail@txdot.gov, comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 06:29 PM

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Dear TxDOT & Project Engineer:

I am a resident of Houston & very involved with the proposed project on IH-45. My house & neighborhood is possibly threatened by potential expansion of right-of-way of IH-45. I have the following comments & suggestions:

1. Please do not expand the existing right-of-way on I-45 – do not expand the R.O.W. and take any homes or businesses.
2. Please explore alternative means of transportation – instead of continuing to pour more & more concrete – investigate higher density modes of transportation.; such as adding commuter rail on the existing rails in the Hardy Corridor
3. Do NOT have separate diamond lanes – have diamond lanes that can be used for general traffic. They can be restricted during peak times – but we need to use them at all times
4. Whatever TxDOT does – do not negatively affect the quality of life of neighborhoods that are adjacent to IH-45 – that means no increase in noise (hopefully a reduction of noise would be possible); no increase in visual 'blight' and no decrease in air quality.
5. I want a tunnel to be considered for the 4 managed lanes
6. I want a tunnel to be considered for general traffic lanes
7. I do NOT want any new roadway built above ground level – no double decked freeways because of additional noise, pollution & visual blight

8. I do NOT want any roadway to negatively affect water drainage into or out of our neighborhoods at any time, including during construction
9. As a possible alternative – extend Hardy from 610 to downtown; widen Hardy; have TxDOT acquire Hardy and then remove all tolls.
10. Another variation to #9 above is to maintain some lanes on Hardy as HOV / toll lanes and the rest for general traffic mobility
11. In addition to #9 & #10 – coordinate with Metro and rail owners and extend light rail / commuter rail on existing rail tracks already on Hardy
12. Replace and/or supplement Pierce Elevated with a tunnel system
13. There is a conflict between the slide presentation and the Draft Need & Purpose (N & P) and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan (ACPIP). The presentation states that TxDOT will evaluate tunnels as an alternative and neither the N & P draft nor the ACP/IP says that will be done. In fact, neither document mentions a tunnel at all.
14. The N & P states a goal of improving mobility by increasing peak hour travel speeds “by up to 10 mph” (page 1-9, 1.2). Under this ‘goal’, an increase of only 1 mph could be claimed as meeting the objective. We need better, more definitive goals other than increasing travel speeds by as little as 1 mph in return for spending billions of dollars!

## I 45 expansion

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**From:** Alice Laguarda <adjd@sbcglobal.net>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 07:20 PM

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Here are the points we would like you to consider

1. Please do not expand the existing right-of-way on I-45 – do not expand the R.O.W. and take any homes or businesses.
2. Please explore alternative means of transportation – instead of continuing to pour more & more concrete – investigate higher density modes of transportation.; such as adding commuter rail on the existing rails in the Hardy Corridor ☐
3. Do NOT have separate diamond lanes – have diamond lanes that can be used for general traffic. They can be restricted during peak times – but we need to use them at all times ☐
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Thank you for considering these suggestions. We want to keep our neighborhood in tact and keep all of our green space

Alice G Laguarda  
Plantasia Landscaping  
713-819-8374

"There are flowers everywhere, for those who bother to look"  
Henri Matisse

## Comment Regarding I-45 expansion

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**From:** Sarah Lankau <wibby\_01@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Cc:** Tim Lankau <timplankau@warejackson.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 04:14 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing with what little time I have to chime in on the proposed I-45 expansion. As a resident of the Woodland Heights Subdivision, which sits just west of I-45, I am against most, if not all, aspects of this project. A budget of \$2.113 Billion of taxpayer dollars hardly justifies the projected increase of speeds between 2-3 mph. Additionally, the loss of homes, park space, and quality of life for those of us living close to I-45 should, at the very least, encourage project designers to consider tunnels instead of additional ROW or lanes that will add to the noise pollution in the area.

Consider, instead:

- Expand the Hardy Toll Road; with the proposed \$2.113 Billion budget, acquiring/expanding Hardy is well within the reach of TxDOT;
- Explore Metro Light Rail and expanded bus route options;
- Consider a tunnel expansion of Pierce elevated. No current plans include this possibility for exploration.
- Expansions that will not affect our neighborhood's water drainage, both during and after construction.

The east and west of the I-45 corridor is made up of some of the oldest and most historic neighborhoods, homes, and parks in the city of Houston. The high cost that involves our quality of life and the loss of homes and parks simply cannot be weighed against the desires of some to have a few minutes shaved off of their commute.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Lankau

## Proposed I-45 Expansion

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**From:** Tim Lankau <timlankau@warejackson.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Cc:** 'Sarah Lankau' <wibby\_01@yahoo.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 04:36 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

As a resident of the Woodland Heights Subdivision, which sits just west of I-45, I am against most, if not all, aspects of the I-45 expansion project.

The expansion makes no sense from an economic or environmental prospective and will do nothing but increase urban blight for the benefit of many people who do not even live inside the city or county limits. People will tolerate a certain commute time as it relates to a certain amount of house square footage at a certain price point. Any decrease in congestion accomplished by the expansion project will be short lived as homebuilders will just build more houses further out I-45, which will increase the congestion until it reaches the point where people are again encouraged to look to housing options closer to the city. Once the average commute time stabilizes again at a similar level to what it now is, the only lasting effects of the expansion project will be a higher volume of traffic and all the noise and air pollution that goes with it.

A budget of \$2.113 Billion of taxpayer dollars hardly justifies the projected increase of speeds between 2-3 mph. Additionally, the loss of homes, park space, and quality of life for those of us living close to I-45 should, at the very least, encourage project designers to consider tunnels instead of additional ROW or lanes that will add to the noise pollution in the area. Further, encouraging new home construction beyond the city limits at the cost of green space and ascetics in closer in areas will diminish the economic incentives to revitalize urban neighborhoods.

The east and west of the I-45 corridor is made up of some of the oldest and most historic neighborhoods, homes, and parks in the city of Houston. The high cost that involves our quality of life and the loss of homes and parks simply cannot be weighed against the desires of some to have a few minutes shaved off of their commute. It is fundamentally wrong to tear down, or decrease the value of, even one person's existing home who has made the conscious decision to

live closer to where they work so that someone else can build a new house further away from the city.

Sincerely,

Tim Lankau, Partner

Ware, Jackson, Lee, and Chambers, LLP

America Tower, 42nd Floor

2929 Allen Parkway

Houston, Texas 77019

Tel: (713) 659-6400           (713) 659-6400

Fax: (713) 659-6262

## I-45 Expansion

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**From:** "jmozur@aol.com" <jmozur@aol.com>

**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com

**Priority:** Normal

**Date:** 12-05-2011 10:23 PM

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TO ALL PEOPLE AT I-45 NORTH AND MORE:

1. Please do not expand the existing right-of-way on I-45 – do not expand the R.O.W. and take any homes or businesses.
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## Citizens' Transportation Coalition Comments

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**From:** Marci Perry <txsparkle.marci@gmail.com>  
**To:** comments@lh45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 05:22 PM

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Sent 4:22 with File Attached.

December 5, 2011

**Director of Project Development**

**TxDOT**

**P.O.Box 1386**

**Houston, TX 77251-1386**

[comments@ih45northandmore.com](mailto:comments@ih45northandmore.com)

**Re: North Houston Highway Improvement Program Scoping Comments**

Dear Project Development Staff:

CTC submits its comments regarding the November 15 and 17, 2011 scoping meetings and the current documents associated therewith for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project.

**Summary of CTC's position: Further scoping and public input is needed before proceeding to the DEIS.**

TxDOT and the other agencies could benefit from further scoping meetings with plans that are more developed. The project purpose and need statement, proposed federal action, and intended covered activities need greater definition before the public can comment on the scope of the environmental analysis.

Meetings should involve HCTRA and the Downtown interests and intermodality representatives such as Metro, rail, City of Houston, as well as the public.

CTC notes TXDOT has a history of pushing for wider highways as a solution to traffic congestion. Unfortunately, any traffic relief offered by extra lanes would be temporary and probably just move the jam elsewhere. Meanwhile, neighborhoods along the corridor would be stuck with more noise, more pollution, and property takings for the expansion.

CTC would like to see a solution that improves quality of life in the region, such as HOV lanes with express bus service in both directions.

CTC further adheres to a change it first policy. CTC notes choke points are at interchanges and downtown. We ask that TxDOT give serious consideration to breaking out the interchanges, particularly at 610 and I-45 and examining their reconstruction for categorical exclusion. congestion occurs at interchanges. If you change the interchanges first, then you can determine better the extent of your congestion problem arising out of traffic levels and not due to design constraints.

Finally CTC supports the principles of the I-45 Coalition and wholeheartedly endorse them.

**CTC's position on scoping for this project: further scoping is needed for all facets of the NHHIP.**

**There was too little detail about the specifics at the November meetings for this to be all the scoping meetings to be conducted. Informal Route Design Workshops could be scheduled to implement scoping.**

There has not been much work disclosed to the public regarding integration of I-45 and the Hardy Toll Road and the downtown segments. There was little detail about the specifics about how these pieces would fit together: would added lanes all be on I-45, all on Hardy, or some combination of both? What would be the impact on Level of Service from the respective combinations? Are the toll pieces self-sustaining?

TxDOT should include one or more Route Design Workshops. CTC, as a volunteer organization, has several engineers who would like to have input into route design at a detailed level.

Scoping ensures problems that would be raised are identified early in the process. Many of these concerns will echo concerns the public presented when this project was first presented several years earlier only now it is more complex with the addition of the Hardy Toll Road and the complex downtown reconstruction issues posed by the project.

**CTC sincerely hopes that TxDOT will not use SAFETEA-LU's design standards to undermine design and impact concerns of the I-45 stakeholders and the elected officials supporting them. This is particularly true for the issue of vertical alignment.**

TxDOT has indicated that the I-45 reconstruction project was put on hold because of changes that would have to be made to meet SAFETEA-LU design standards.

**CTC supports the principles of the I-45 Coalition regarding the design and alignment of I-45. CTC is working with, and has worked with, the I-45 Coalition and CTC members assisted in the formulation of several of these principles.**

With regard to I-45, among the I-45 Coalition principles we support as goals or design features, and supported earlier are

- Schematics and Alignments: Plans are unknown; Disclose the plans;
- Disclose Corridor Allocation with Hardy: Presently TxDOT plans to add 4 lanes total in some combination between I-45 and Hardy Toll Road;
- Construction Costs: Set forth costs honestly and rationally to prevent bias as to design alternatives chosen; do not under- or over-state costs
- Adopt a rational timeline and sequencing for the Corridor features;
- Vertical Alignment: I-45 Coalition opposed to change in I-45 elevation; cantilever access roads if necessary;
- Land Use: Stay within current footprint of I-45; No condemnation on I-45;
- Tunneling: Examine and educate re twin bore tunneling for at least a portion of the project, particularly Pierce Elevated; outreach and education needed;
- Hydrology & Greenspace: Rational detention and retention needed; no destruction of current greenspace and drainage facilities;
- Participation by Harris County in the NEPA process; and
- Economic justice & toll viability for Toll Road stakeholders

Much I-45 public participation has occurred and with a great deal of public support by elected officials. CTC hopes that TxDOT will remember the very strong public member and elected officials and other coalition regarding design and impact features for I-45 and those sentiments have not changed at all.

**While it is hard to argue against rebuilding the interchanges, CTC has not yet been convinced of the Need for I-45 reconstruction if there is not a significant improvement in level of service.**

As CTC understands the plans, the current proposed I-45 design is not increasing the LOS by an amount that makes the project readily justifiable. CTC previously commented strongly on the US290 Corridor project about the fiscal waste and unnecessary environmental and social harm from underbuilding the 290 project. We do not know yet if we will have a similar concern here, but it points out the need for more scoping even on the I-45 alignment proposals.

**Purpose and Need v. Need and Purpose? In any event, the statement should be broader and should be signed off by both TxDOT and HCTRA, or TxDOT on behalf of HCTRA, as well as other participating agencies, e.g. Metro, HCFFD, USACE, et al.**

We hope in the responses to comments that any distinction between the two labels will be addressed.

Until HCTRA plays a role in the scoping and formulation of the purpose and need for the project, it will be impossible for the public and the agencies to decide upon the feasible alternatives for the project to frame its purpose and need, much less to pick a preferred alternative.

Other agencies such as USACE and Metro should be involved, but the two agencies TxDOT and HCTRA are the foundations or leads for the Corridor project.

As for I-45 design features, the I-45 Coalition, CTC, and other organizations several years ago sought and got significant federal and state elected official support for their concerns about project design constraints and I-45 Coalition now restates many of those concerns of officials and residential stakeholders with the full support of CTC.

But CTC thinks the scoping should allow input not only of what persons do not want for I-45 alignment issues, but also what would be concerns as to divvying up lane miles, funding, economic justice, and multimodality issues with the Hardy Toll Road.

Then there is the issue of the Downtown segment. CTC states herein its position that serious consideration be given to making it a separate project.

**The need for regulatory permits should be part of future scoping.**

CTC asserts there will be a need for Section 404 permits and other related permits. Many organizations affected by the project such as White Oak Bayou Association and Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association as well as environmental groups such as Sierra Club and Environmental Defense need to be assured that the issue of necessary permits is one that has not been overlooked, and TxDOT will not take the position that it need not tier with the USACE or will just handle the issue as it arises after environmental clearance.

The sooner TxDOT identifies any 4(f) problems, particularly with regard to parklands at interchanges, at drainage areas, and downtown, the better also.

**HCTRA As A Cooperating Agency: Does HCTRA intend to comply with the NEPA process?**

TxDOT must indicate whether HCTRA has agreed to be a cooperating agency in the NHHIP. The concept of an I-45 reconstruction has been around for several years, but the Corridor concept of considering both a TxDOT and HCTRA project together is new. In many respects this project is similar to the US290 Corridor project in terms of environmental clearance by HCTRA.

CTC would rather see everything sooner rather than later; it saves time and money in the long run.

Still the public needs to know HCTRA's intent to participate in scoping as soon as possible. Delineating the respective roles of the two entities will be important for alignment alternatives—who will get how many lanes and who will control those lanes---and for financing and environmental obligations.

**Intermodality must be considered under SAFETEA-LU.**

As CTC understands it, the original project was tabled due to SAFETEA-LU design issues. SAFETEA-LU also has many other “requirements” including intermodal requirements.

Other agencies must be considered for use and planning of I-45. For example, Greenspoint will continue to be an important Houston business hub on I-45. Metro needs to be brought in to consider deploying a

BRT service from Northline Mall to IAH, with deployment to begin the day after LRT operations begin to Northline Mall.

If Hardy is included in the corridor, then Harris County and citizens may wish to reconsider multiple uses of the right of way, say for a high-speed rail corridor, which might also extend to Galveston through the downtown tunnel.

I-45 has long supported biking routes. These routes should be upgraded and pushed further out of the downtown core.

#### **Tiers and Corps permits under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404**

If tiers are being used, this concept must be made clear at the outset of any scoping meeting, so that participants do not concentrate on issues not addressed at this time.

#### **Downtown-CTC asserts this should be broken out as a separate project and could be under NEPA.**

Downtown is not of a piece with I-45 and Hardy. There are many more different types of players, design features to be analyzed such as tunneling, complex interchanges, and need for space for other modes of transportation.

With the current level of information there is no way to explain to the public or other agencies what you want them to participate in.

Downtown would be an engineering challenge and expensive, but fixing it could make TxDOT a mobility hero, creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century hub for Houston and could save Houston's downtown from choking. The design would also necessitate leaving room for other modes such as freight, commuter, and light rail, HCTRA's toll roads if they are excluded from this project, street crossings.

CTC, as a volunteer organization, helped design and championed the Downtown Squiggle and was cited by TxDOT for its expertise with freight rail. Many other volunteer organizations can also provide input for consideration regarding feasibility and cost.

**Tunnels: Tunneling was not mentioned anywhere in the documents published to date.**

TxDOT verbally said it was committing to evaluate tunneling at least downtown, but there is no commitment in writing to do so. Elected officials and the public in previous discussions regarding I-45 expressed strong interest for tunneling and confidence with regard to feasibility issues.

Replacing the Pierce Elevated, at least, with tunneling and surface local streets could add immensely to mobility for the downtown area and the city as a whole.

CTC has no doubt that the engineers who work with TxDOT have the competence to deal with water encroachment as do engineers in other cities having underwater and underground tunnels.

There was previously a great deal of volunteer evaluation and analysis of tunneling. CTC has volunteers to work on this issue as do other civic organizations, so we are certain TxDOT's consulting engineers are competent to tackle the project.

Costs must be evaluated on a rational basis, as compared to the cost evaluation for a depressed freeway on IH-10. External benefits must be included. These benefits might include additional surface space for local surface roads, bikeways, and even real estate development. For example, if parts of I-45 were to be tunneled, then the space above I-45 could be re-purposed for a multi-use pathway or a "Complete Street"

Moving the highway underground would not necessarily require any sort of roadway up top at all. Most of these types of projects that have been completed for major highways or thoroughfares (for example Phoenix, Boston, Philly, Manhattan, Providence, Bellevue, and Seattle) have replaced the roadway with a linear park and real estate structures. TxDOT could consider selling off the land above for development. That could be a potential fund raiser for the tunnel itself.

Having underground exchanges can make the engineering much more expensive and complicated, but by careful analysis of traffic patterns, high volume through traffic can be run underground and local streets placed above ground. This means that the idea of a surface park is lost, but should increase the acceptability of all players.

Drainage would be an issue, but our engineers can handle it if other engineers can keep the Hudson River out. The lowest chord of the tunnel should be for drainage and the upper for power and communications. Flooding would be prevented by raising the entrances above 500 year flood elevation before submergence.

### **Toll Roads and Level of Service, Toll Viability, and Costs**

CTC is not adverse to toll roads as compared to other highway features. Toll roads, however, must be evaluated with regard to self-sustainability. The expected need for PPP as a financing mechanism must be disclosed early on and the terms and conditions of agreements must be disclosed so that stakeholders can evaluate debt encumbrances to which they are being subjected.

**CTC supports the fix it first principle for all highway and bridge reconstruction. Change the interchanges first, particularly I-45 at IH-610. Consider them for categorical exclusion status. Then reevaluate the congestion problem.**

Without further statistics, anecdotally it appears to CTC that choke points are at interchanges and downtown. We ask that TxDOT give serious consideration to breaking out the interchanges, particularly at 610 and I-45 and examining their reconstruction for categorical exclusion. Much congestion occurs at interchanges. If you change the interchanges first, then you can determine better the extent of your congestion problem arising out of traffic levels and not due to design constraints.

### **Sequencing: Fix it first may reduce condemnation and right of way requirements.**

Without proper sequencing, the I-45 Coalition will not get its wish about no expansion of the I-45 footprint unless the expansion is pushed onto Hardy. While the interchanges are difficult, TxDOT is getting to where it has mastered the art of the interchange. The environmental documents released to date make it wise to fix the choke points first, then, and only then, reevaluate and model how much right of way, or footprint expansion, will have to occur. There are numerous residents who live right along the highway now and the impact on them will be severe.

TxDOT says that the project “may require acquisition of additional ROW in some areas” (page 1-8). From I-10 to 610 North, TxDOT states that additional Right-of-Way (ROW) will “likely be required” at all intersections of I-45 with existing streets. And from 610 North all the way to Beltway 8 North – ROW will “likely be required” along the entire roadway!

Further, the Agency Coordination & Public Involvement Plan (ACPIP)

TxDOT states that “Acquisition of additional ROW would be required to construct the proposed improvements” (page 2).

**In addition to Purpose and Need, TxDOT needs to reevaluate the benefit of completing the project at the expected costs under a classical cost/benefit analysis. Expressed in terms of level of service it released the following 2005 information.**

In November 2005, TxDOT released their North-Hardy Corridor: Highway Alternatives Analysis. In this study, TxDOT recommended having 4 managed lanes (3 more lanes than existing currently) from I-10 to Beltway 8. TxDOT estimated the cost – in 2004 dollars – would be \$2.113 Billion.

According to TxDOT, after doing the project, in the year 2025, the peak speeds in the main traffic lanes would only be 3 mph faster than if we did not do the project at all !!

In our opinion, this does not sound like much ‘bang for the buck’, especially when they are talking more than 2 Billion bucks (in 2004 dollars)!

## **Conclusion**

For the reasons above we strongly urge TxDOT and other agencies to announce more scoping meetings of a more detailed nature in the very near future before completing the preparation of the DEIS. What has been announced to date is insufficient for adequate and informed public comment. Besides our request for further detailed disclosure of plans and current alternatives, we further urge TxDOT to consider the principles we stated about sequencing, fix it first, segmenting downtown, tunneling, optimal allocation of lanes between I-45 and Hardy, participation by Harris County in the NEPA process, leaving space for and planning for multimodal features, and honoring the I-45 Coalition design principles that are backed by elected officials.

Respectfully submitted,

December 5, 2011

Marci Perry, Chair

Citizens' Transportation Coalition

Contributors: Marci Perry, Chair; Carol Caul, Advocacy Chair; Zakcq Lokrem, Outreach Chair, Ed Browne, Board of Directors, Peter Wang, Board of Directors, Tom Dornbusch, Board of Directors, Jon Boyd, volunteer, James Llamas, volunteer

PO BOX 66532 HOUSTON TX 77266-6532

December 5, 2011

**Board of directors**

Ed Browne  
Carol Caul  
Tom Dornbusch  
Adra Hooks  
Robin Holzer  
Fred Lazare  
Zakcq Lockrem  
Tom Kornegay  
Marci Perry  
Peter Wang

**Director of Project Development**  
**TxDOT**  
**P.O.Box 1386**  
**Houston, TX 77251-1386**  
[comments@ih45northandmore.com](mailto:comments@ih45northandmore.com)

**Re: North Houston Highway Improvement Program Scoping  
Comments**

Dear Project Development Staff:

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Scoping ensures problems that would be raised are identified early in the process. Many of these concerns will echo concerns the public presented when this project was first presented several years earlier only now it is more complex with the addition of the Hardy Toll Road and the complex downtown reconstruction issues posed by the project.

**CTC sincerely hopes that TxDOT will not use SAFETEA-LU's design standards to undermine design and impact concerns of the I-45 stakeholders and the elected officials supporting them. This is particularly true for the issue of vertical alignment.**

TxDOT has indicated that the I-45 reconstruction project was put on hold because of changes that would have to be made to meet SAFETEA-LU design standards.

**CTC supports the principles of the I-45 Coalition regarding the design and alignment of I-45. CTC is working with, and has worked with, the I-45 Coalition and CTC members assisted in the formulation of several of these principles.**

With regard to I-45, among the I-45 Coalition principles we support as goals or design features, and supported earlier are

- Schematics and Alignments: Plans are unknown; Disclose the plans;
- Disclose Corridor Allocation with Hardy: Presently TxDOT plans to add 4 lanes total in some combination between I-45 and Hardy Toll Road;
- Construction Costs: Set forth costs honestly and rationally to prevent bias as to design alternatives chosen; do not under- or over-state costs
- Adopt a rational timeline and sequencing for the Corridor features;
- Vertical Alignment: I-45 Coalition opposed to change in I-45 elevation; cantilever access roads if necessary;
- Land Use: Stay within current footprint of I-45; No condemnation on I-45;

- Tunneling: Examine and educate re twin bore tunneling for at least a portion of the project, particularly Pierce Elevated; outreach and education needed;
- Hydrology & Greenspace: Rational detention and retention needed; no destruction of current greenspace and drainage facilities;
- Participation by Harris County in the NEPA process; and
- Economic justice & toll viability for Toll Road stakeholders

Much I-45 public participation has occurred and with a great deal of public support by elected officials. CTC hopes that TxDOT will remember the very strong public member and elected officials and other coalition regarding design and impact features for I-45 and those sentiments have not changed at all.

**While it is hard to argue against rebuilding the interchanges, CTC has not yet been convinced of the Need for I-45 reconstruction if there is not a significant improvement in level of service.**

As CTC understands the plans, the current proposed I-45 design is not increasing the LOS by an amount that makes the project readily justifiable. CTC previously commented strongly on the US290 Corridor project about the fiscal waste and unnecessary environmental and social harm from underbuilding the 290 project. We do not know yet if we will have a similar concern here, but it points out the need for more scoping even on the I-45 alignment proposals.

**Purpose and Need v. Need and Purpose? In any event, the statement should be broader and should be signed off by both TxDOT and HCTRA, or TxDOT on behalf of HCTRA, as well as other participating agencies, e.g. Metro, HCFFD, USACE, et al.**

We hope in the responses to comments that any distinction between the two labels will be addressed.

Until HCTRA plays a role in the scoping and formulation of the purpose and need for the project, it will be impossible for the public and the agencies to decide upon the feasible alternatives for the project to frame its purpose and need, much less to pick a preferred alternative.

Other agencies such as USACE and Metro should be involved, but the two agencies TxDOT and HCTRA are the foundations or leads for the Corridor project.

As for I-45 design features, the I-45 Coalition, CTC, and other organizations several years ago sought and got significant federal and state elected official support for their concerns about project design constraints and I-45 Coalition now restates many of those concerns of officials and residential stakeholders with the full support of CTC.

But CTC thinks the scoping should allow input not only of what persons do not want for I-45 alignment issues, but also what would be concerns as to divvying up lane miles, funding, economic justice, and multimodality issues with the Hardy Toll Road.

Then there is the issue of the Downtown segment. CTC states herein its position that serious consideration be given to making it a separate project.

**The need for regulatory permits should be part of future scoping.**

CTC asserts there will be a need for Section 404 permits and other related permits. Many organizations affected by the project such as White Oak Bayou Association and Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association as well as environmental groups such as Sierra Club and Environmental Defense need to be assured that the issue of necessary permits is one that has not been overlooked, and TxDOT will not take the position that it need not tier with the USACE or will just handle the issue as it arises after environmental clearance.

The sooner TxDOT identifies any 4(f) problems, particularly with regard to parklands at interchanges, at drainage areas, and downtown, the better also.

**HCTRA As A Cooperating Agency: Does HCTRA intend to comply with the NEPA process?**

TxDOT must indicate whether HCTRA has agreed to be a cooperating agency in the NHHIP. The concept of an I-45 reconstruction has been around for several years, but the Corridor concept of considering both a TxDOT and HCTRA project together is new. In many respects this project is similar to the US290 Corridor project in terms of environmental clearance by HCTRA.

CTC would rather see everything sooner rather than later; it saves time and money in the long run.

Still the public needs to know HCTRA's intent to participate in scoping as soon as possible. Delineating the respective roles of the two entities will be important for alignment alternatives—who will get how many lanes and who will control those lanes---and for financing and environmental obligations.

**Intermodality must be considered under SAFETEA-LU.**

As CTC understands it, the original project was tabled due to SAFETEA-LU design issues. SAFETEA-LU also has many other “requirements” including intermodal requirements.

Other agencies must be considered for use and planning of I-45. For example, Greenspoint will continue to be an important Houston business hub on I-45. Metro needs to be brought in to consider deploying a BRT service from Northline Mall to IAH, with deployment to begin the day after LRT operations begin to Northline Mall.

If Hardy is included in the corridor, then Harris County and citizens may wish to reconsider multiple uses of the right of way, say for a high-speed rail corridor, which might also extend to Galveston through the downtown tunnel.

I-45 has long supported biking routes. These routes should be upgraded and pushed further out of the downtown core.

### **Tiers and Corps permits under Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404**

If tiers are being used, this concept must be made clear at the outset of any scoping meeting, so that participants do not concentrate on issues not addressed at this time.

### **Downtown-CTC asserts this should be broken out as a separate project and could be under NEPA.**

Downtown is not of a piece with I-45 and Hardy. There are many more different types of players, design features to be analyzed such as tunneling, complex interchanges, and need for space for other modes of transportation.

With the current level of information there is no way to explain to the public or other agencies what you want them to participate in.

Downtown would be an engineering challenge and expensive, but fixing it could make TxDOT a mobility hero, creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century hub for Houston and could save Houston's downtown from choking. The design would also necessitate leaving room for other modes such as freight, commuter, and light rail, HCTRA's toll roads if they are excluded from this project, street crossings.

CTC, as a volunteer organization, helped design and championed the Downtown Squiggle and was cited by TxDOT for its expertise with freight rail. Many other volunteer organizations can also provide input for consideration regarding feasibility and cost.

### **Tunnels: Tunneling was not mentioned anywhere in the documents published to date.**

TxDOT verbally said it was committing to evaluate tunneling at least downtown, but there is no commitment in writing to do so. Elected officials and the public in previous discussions regarding I-45 expressed strong interest for tunneling and confidence with regard to feasibility issues.

Replacing the Pierce Elevated, at least, with tunneling and surface local streets could add immensely to mobility for the downtown area and the city as a whole.

CTC has no doubt that the engineers who work with TxDOT have the competence to deal with water encroachment as do engineers in other cities having underwater and underground tunnels.

There was previously a great deal of volunteer evaluation and analysis of tunneling. CTC has volunteers to work on this issue as do other civic organizations, so we are certain TxDOT's consulting engineers are competent to tackle the project.

Costs must be evaluated on a rational basis, as compared to the cost evaluation for a depressed freeway on IH-10. External benefits must be included. These benefits might include additional surface space for local surface roads, bikeways, and even real estate development. For example,

if parts of I-45 were to be tunneled, then the space above I-45 could be re-purposed for a multi-use pathway or a "Complete Street"

Moving the highway underground would not necessarily require any sort of roadway up top at all. Most of these types of projects that have been completed for major highways or thoroughfares (for example Phoenix, Boston, Philly, Manhattan, Providence, Bellevue, and Seattle) have replaced the roadway with a linear park and real estate structures. TxDOT could consider selling off the land above for development. That could be a potential fund raiser for the tunnel itself.

Having underground exchanges can make the engineering much more expensive and complicated, but by careful analysis of traffic patterns, high volume through traffic can be run underground and local streets placed above ground. This means that the idea of a surface park is lost, but should increase the acceptability of all players.

Drainage would be an issue, but our engineers can handle it if other engineers can keep the Hudson River out. The lowest chord of the tunnel should be for drainage and the upper for power and communications. Flooding would be prevented by raising the entrances above 500 year flood elevation before submergence.

#### **Toll Roads and Level of Service, Toll Viability, and Costs**

CTC is not adverse to toll roads as compared to other highway features. Toll roads, however, must be evaluated with regard to self-sustainability. The expected need for PPP as a financing mechanism must be disclosed early on and the terms and conditions of agreements must be disclosed so that stakeholders can evaluate debt encumbrances to which they are being subjected.

#### **CTC supports the fix it first principle for all highway and bridge reconstruction. Change the interchanges first, particularly I-45 at IH-610. Consider them for categorical exclusion status. Then reevaluate the congestion problem.**

Without further statistics, anecdotally it appears to CTC that choke points are at interchanges and downtown. We ask that TxDOT give serious consideration to breaking out the interchanges, particularly at 610 and I-45 and examining their reconstruction for categorical exclusion. Much congestion occurs at interchanges. If you change the interchanges first, then you can determine better the extent of your congestion problem arising out of traffic levels and not due to design constraints.

#### **Sequencing: Fix it first may reduce condemnation and right of way requirements.**

Without proper sequencing, the I-45 Coalition will not get its wish about no expansion of the I-45 footprint unless the expansion is pushed onto Hardy. While the interchanges are difficult, TxDOT is getting to where it has mastered the art of the interchange. The environmental

documents released to date make it wise to fix the choke points first, then, and only then, reevaluate and model how much right of way, or footprint expansion, will have to occur. There are numerous residents who live right along the highway now and the impact on them will be severe.

TxDOT says that the project “may require acquisition of additional ROW in some areas” (page 1-8). From I-10 to 610 North, TxDOT states that additional Right-of-Way (ROW) will “likely be required” at all intersections of I-45 with existing streets. And from 610 North all the way to Beltway 8 North – ROW will “likely be required” along the entire roadway!

Further, the Agency Coordination & Public Involvement Plan (ACPIP) TxDOT states that “Acquisition of additional ROW would be required to construct the proposed improvements” (page 2).

**In addition to Purpose and Need, TxDOT needs to reevaluate the benefit of completing the project at the expected costs under a classical cost/benefit analysis. Expressed in terms of level of service it released the following 2005 information.**

In November 2005, TxDOT released their North-Hardy Corridor: Highway Alternatives Analysis. In this study, TxDOT recommended having 4 managed lanes (3 more lanes than existing currently) from I-10 to Beltway 8. TxDOT estimated the cost – in 2004 dollars – would be \$2.113 Billion.

According to TxDOT, after doing the project, in the year 2025, the peak speeds in the main traffic lanes would only be 3 mph faster than if we did not do the project at all !!

In our opinion, this does not sound like much ‘bang for the buck’, especially when they are talking more than 2 Billion bucks (in 2004 dollars)!

## **Conclusion**

For the reasons above we strongly urge TxDOT and other agencies to announce more scoping meetings of a more detailed nature in the very near future before completing the preparation of the DEIS. What has been announced to date is insufficient for adequate and informed public comment. Besides our request for further detailed disclosure of plans and current alternatives, we further urge TxDOT to consider the principles we stated about sequencing, fix it first, segmenting downtown, tunneling, optimal allocation of lanes between I-45 and Hardy, participation by Harris County in the NEPA process, leaving space for and planning for multimodal features, and honoring the I-45 Coalition design principles that are backed by elected officials.

Respectfully submitted,  
December 5, 2011

Marci Perry, Chair

Citizens' Transportation Coalition

Contributors: Marci Perry, Chair; Carol Caul, Advocacy Chair; Zakcq Lokrem, Outreach Chair, Ed Browne, Board of Directors, Peter Wang, Board of Directors, Tom Dornbusch, Board of Directors, Jon Boyd, volunteer, James Llamas, volunteer

## Comments on possible I-45 changes

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**From:** Valerie <valeriegp@gmail.com>  
**To:** comments@IH45NorthandMore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 06:28 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a resident of Houston and a property owner in the Lindale Park subdivision, located just east of I-45 and south of 610. My house is less than one mile from I-45 north of Calvalcade. I recently attended an information session at Davis High School about possible changes to I-45 between Downtown and Beltway 8, and I am very concerned about what may happen to I-45, my neighborhood, and the standard of living in this area.

I am against any expansion of the right-of-way along I-45 heading north out of downtown Houston. I have serious concerns that this will have a profound negative impact on the community in exchange for very little improvement. While I understand that traffic congestion is an issue on I-45, based on reports I have read the possible projects will make very little difference. One report I've heard is that these "improvements" would increase average speeds by 3 mph. As a resident of this area who drives to work on this stretch of I-45, I feel this is a negligible improvement and is not worth the possible consequences.

Does I-45 need improvement? Yes. The roadway is bad and there are some dangerous areas. I will gladly put up with construction for improvements in these areas, as I gladly put up with construction that is bringing light rail to my neighborhood. But any changes are made to the roadway that enlarge it and bring it closer to the neighborhood, expand upward and add noise, pollution and unsightly roads to the area, will only hurt the neighborhood and the city.

The state should consider alternatives to expanding the roadway or expanding upwards, such as tunnels and alternative transportation systems. If Texas and Houston wish to be first class areas to live, and if Houston, as it continues to grow, wants to be a healthy, safe and livable city, we must not continue to pour concrete and expand highways in the city. Instead, the state and the city should invest in alternative and public transportation.

I have been in my home for less than two years, so I am not a homeowner who has watched the city grow around me and dislikes progress. As I mentioned, I have happily supported the rail and dealt with the issues of construction in my neighborhood. But expansion of I-45 is not a worthwhile improvement to the area. It is shortsighted and will not help Houston be a modern, appealing city. In short, as a property owner and proud Houstonian, I am against any expansion to I-45 that will enlarge the right of way or raise the roadway.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Prilop  
303 Sue Street  
Houston, Tx 77009

## I-45 improvement project

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**From:** Maryellen Quarles <mquarles@me.com>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Cc:** Allison & Matt Hartzell <Redal711@aol.com>, jim@i-45coalition.org  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 10:08 PM

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We have been residents of Houston for 13 years and would like to see a rail line connecting the major outlying communities: the Woodlands/Kingwood, Katy, Clear Lake and Conroe. Begin with the corridor north, perhaps paralleling the Hardy Toll Road and/or using the existing rail lines. Obviously, developing such an infrastructure would require a long-range plan, extending past the defined time frame laid out for the I45 Improvement project.

As your charts depict, the population in and around Houston will continue to grow. Expanding the highway will only provide a short term solution. Eventually, the highways will be clogged again. Where to from there? Implementing a long-range plan such as commuter rail will be an investment with long-term rewards. It's imperative that we consider solutions that have the greatest long-term, positive impact; not necessarily the most obvious or simplest to implement at this time.

We have lived in major cities around the world, including New York City, Chicago and The Hague, and are astounded that this country's fourth largest city does not have a major, commuter rail system in place or planned.

Regards,  
Maryellen and Patrick Quarles  
403 Byrne St.  
Houston, Texas 77009

cc: Allison Hartzell, President, Woodland Heights Civic Association  
Jim Weston, President, I-45 Coalition

## IH45 North Development Comment

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**From:** sound@goowy.com  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-05-2011 10:48 PM

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Dear Sir/Madam,

After receiving information from the public meeting, i would like to ask TxTOT to seriously examine the "Houston I-45 Parkway & Tunnel" proposal accessible from <http://www.i45parkway.com/> .

Accommodating traffic by adding laneways has merits but there are serious negatives to be considered as well. Having lived in several other metropolitan settings around the world, i strongly believe that this parkway/tunnel model will provide a successful solution to the congestion this transit system is facing without the damage that pollution (both noise and environmental) can have on our communities and waterways.

I hope that TxTOT will takes its leadership in a positive step with an infrastructure expansion that is both smart and sensitive to the context. In the twenty first century, a high capacity transit corridor should be able to function without sacrificing its surroundings, but rather enhance it.

Sincerely,

Judy Weng

## I-45

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**From:** Paige Clarke <sppclarke@yahoo.com>  
**To:** "comments@ih45northandmore.com" <comments@ih45northandmore.com>  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-06-2011 11:53 AM

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As local residents living close to I-45 inner loop, we notice that the critical period for traffic congestion is the morning and afternoon rush hour, where traffic is primarily coming in from north of the beltway and returning. We support that something needs to be done to relieve this bottleneck and due to the massive costs (in our view) of potentially widening I-45 inside the loop, we think the Hardy toll road should be considered for development as it is underutilized, relative to I-45.

Our recommendation is therefore:

1. Extend Hardy south of I-610 to I-10 and I-59 as noted in presentation, creating good and direct access to downtown and to I-10 going east and south onto I-45 going south
2. Add 2 extra lanes to Hardy for rush hour traffic, changing their lane direction am and pm. This should have major effect on minimizing costs and reducing traffic on I-45
3. Remove tolls to encourage use of Hardy toll road.

Also

4. Extend metro for a park and ride feature from downtown, to the airport and further north to a park and ride location somewhere around the woodlands. This would further reduce traffic, increase revenues for Metro and provide clean ( we don't use the taxis from the airport anymore as they were often dirty and drivers don't know their way around Houston) comfortable journey from the airport to downtown

Regards,

James and Paige Clarke  
423 Woodland St.  
Houston TX 77009

## reduction of feeder in inner city

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**From:** Bill Shirley <bshirley@shirl.com>  
**To:** comments@ih45northandmore.com  
**Priority:** Normal  
**Date:** 12-06-2011 02:13 PM

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Unlike the horrible actions recently on I-10, TXDOTs plans should be to reduce feeders on interstate freeways cutting through dense cities.

I would go into detailed explanation of this, but I don't have time to write a doctoral thesis.

FEWER access points would facilitate traffic flow as well.

-Bill Shirley  
Houston, Texas

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