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Southeast Corridor
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
Public Hearing

August 29, 2006
Third Ward Multi-Service Center
3611 Ennis
Houston, Texas
6:30 p.m.

1 MS. MARSHALL: Well, good evening everyone.
2 My name is Karen Marshall and I know I see a lot of
3 familiar faces from the Southeast Corridor. We've had
4 a number of years of work on this, and we're finally
5 here. Tonight we are going to have a public hearing
6 for the Southeast Corridor for the Draft Environmental
7 Impact Statement.

8 And at this time I'd like to introduce some
9 of the elected officials who are here. We have
10 Marnine Thomas representing Congresswoman Sheila
11 Jackson Lee's office. We also have State
12 Representative Garnet Coleman. And I do see --

13 REPRESENTATIVE COLEMAN: Here I am. I'm
14 hiding.

15 MS. MARSHALL: He's back there. I do see
16 Terrance Fontaine, who I know works with Mayor Bill
17 White. I'm not sure if anyone else is here, City
18 Counsel or representatives that may not have signed
19 in. Have I missed anybody?

20 Also, I'd like to introduce METRO board
21 members who are with us this evening, board member
22 Jackie Freeman, George DeMontrond, Louise Richman and
23 METRO's president and CEO Frank Wilson, who is also
24 here with us. Frank. There he is back there. Thank
25 you. And I'll introduce our Executive VP John, who

1 everyone knows, as well, in just a minute.

2 As I mentioned before, this evening we're
3 here to discuss the Southeast Draft Environmental
4 Impact Statement. So this is just a reminder if you
5 didn't go through the lobby. This is to discuss the
6 north-south connection coming from downtown, Scott
7 Street with two alternatives, either the alignment on
8 Wheeler to MLK to Palm Center or Griggs to Palm
9 Center. So that's the topic of discussion for this
10 evening.

11 If you have not signed up to speak, you have
12 an opportunity. There are sign-in sheets in the back,
13 and you may sign in. We will be accepting those. We
14 have the room -- yeah, there's -- they're holding up
15 the sign-in sheets. If anyone wants to speak, you
16 need to fill out that comment card and turn it in, and
17 you will be called up to speak.

18 Written comments may be submitted to METRO,
19 and if you want to write this down, if you don't want
20 to speak tonight, you can send in your comments to
21 Rhonda Boyer at the Metropolitan Transit Authority,
22 P.O. Box 61429, Houston 77208-1429. As a reminder,
23 comments must be postmarked by September 11th, 2006.

24 Now I will bring John Sedlak, METRO's
25 Executive Vice President, who will be the official

1 hearing officer for this meeting this evening.

2 MR. SEDLAK: Karen, thank you very much, and,
3 again, thank you to everyone for attending this
4 evening. This is our formal public hearing for the
5 Southeast Corridor Draft Environmental Impact
6 Statement, and it is August 29th, 2006.

7 A brief review of the agenda that we have
8 this evening. We will have a breach presentation by
9 Raquelle Lewis with Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade &
10 Douglas, the planning firm that is doing the Draft
11 Environmental Impact Statement on this particular
12 Southeast Corridor planning study.

13 We will then get into the public comments.
14 That's the purpose of our attendance here tonight.
15 The speakers will be called in the order in which you
16 have turned in your speaker cards, and I will call
17 them in groups of three, and I'll ask that you come
18 forward and maybe take a seat near the microphone, and
19 then I'll call them again and so we can follow one
20 after another so we can work our way through the
21 speakers.

22 And we will be limiting the verbal comments
23 to two minutes per person. We will have a timekeeper
24 here. Karen Marshall will be the official
25 timekeeper.

1 All the comments that will be provided
2 tonight by speakers will be transcribed and will
3 become part of the formal record of this public
4 hearing. Comments that are offered in Spanish will be
5 translated to English, and they will be transcribed.
6 Written comments will also be accepted for the
7 record.

8 So at this time, again, I thank you for
9 joining us this evening. I would like to turn the
10 program over to Raquelle Lewis for a brief
11 presentation, and then I'll come back up, and we'll
12 begin receiving public comments, Raquelle.

13 MS. LEWIS: Thank you, John. Right over to
14 my left I'm going to be displaying the -- the
15 presentation will be displayed over here to your
16 left. Okay. Thank you. Briefly let me go over the
17 steps in the National Environmental Policy Act
18 process. We started the study out in 2001, and we
19 went through our initial notice of intent, the
20 scoping, initial development of the Draft
21 Environmental Impact Statement, and we are currently
22 in the circulation of that document and the receipt of
23 public comments.

24 Our next steps will be to actually do the
25 evaluation of the preferred alternative that's

1 selected as a result of the actions that have been
2 taken for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
3 In that document we will include the comments that we
4 receive tonight as well as describing mitigation
5 measures to the impacts.

6 The next step in this process will be to move
7 forward with trying to get a record of decision from
8 the Federal Transit Administration.

9 The Draft Environmental Impact Statement
10 discusses the social, economic and environmental
11 impacts of the alternatives considered. Throughout
12 the chapters we have an evaluation, the initial
13 summary and then the purpose and need, alternatives
14 considered, affected environment, transportation
15 impacts, the environmental consequences, there's some
16 details about the public and agency coordination
17 that's happened over the course of the study, the
18 evaluation of those alternatives and then information
19 regarding the 4(f) evaluation which is specific to the
20 process.

21 The alternatives considered in the DEIS
22 include a baseline which we refer to as a no build and
23 essentially all alternatives are then evaluated based
24 on a comparison to the no build.

25 There are two -- three technologies evaluated

1 in the document. They include light rail transit, bus
2 rapid transit which is convertible to light rail
3 ultimately and bus rapid transit as a base system.

4 In addition to those technologies, we're also
5 evaluating in the document two alignment alternatives,
6 and that's going from downtown on capital and Rusk as
7 a split pair, so you have one in each direction,
8 coming out of downtown connecting to Scott Street and
9 going south on Scott Street. It's right at Scott and
10 Willow where we have the two options. We have an
11 option of continuing on Scott to Griggs and making an
12 east turn on Griggs to go to the Palm Center area and
13 terminating just past Palm Center at Beekman.

14 The second alternative would be to instead of
15 coming continuing on Scott south of Wheeler, you would
16 actually turn east on Wheeler and make the connection
17 with MLK and tie into Palm Center that way. The
18 terminus on both options is the same.

19 The impacts that are assessed and addressed
20 in the environmental impact statement are land use,
21 socioeconomics, neighborhood impacts, air quality,
22 noise, vibration, visual quality and aesthetics, the
23 ecosystems that would be impacted, water resources,
24 historic resources, parklands, geology and soils,
25 hazardous and regulated materials, safety and

1 security, transportation, construction, secondary and
2 cumulative impacts and the permits that would be
3 required in order to proceed with the investment.

4 This is a brief overview of some of the -- a
5 summary of some of the impacts in the document where
6 we were able to define that there were no major
7 negatives, negative impacts, to air quality, geology
8 and soils, socioeconomic conditions, land use,
9 neighborhoods and transit conditions.

10 Each of the build alternatives that we are
11 considering as a part of this study could attract
12 supportive transportation transit investments.

13 Additionally, there are likely to be
14 right-of-way impacts and relocation impacts to
15 residential and commercial properties along the
16 corridor.

17 As you can see, we have a diagram that
18 basically breaks down what the impact would be with
19 bus rapid transit convertible to light rail on Scott
20 to Griggs -- on the Scott to Griggs alignment as well
21 as the alignment of Wheeler to MLK.

22 You can see that the impact to the whole
23 property acquisitions that will be acquired as a part
24 of the implementation of the investment on Scott to
25 Griggs is higher than what you would have Wheeler to

1 MLK. That is the case as for the acquisitions as well
2 as the number of residential and business
3 displacements.

4 A summary of some of the other impacts that
5 were evaluated in the document is that each of the
6 build alternatives would have new visual elements that
7 would be added under each of the build alternatives.

8 There are also potential impacts to one
9 historic building, and we are traveling through three
10 historic districts as a part of the alignments that
11 are considered under the Southeast Corridor.

12 There are also potential sites for hazardous
13 and regulated materials, that's gas station leaks,
14 underground pumps, dry cleaners, stuff like that, that
15 have been identified that would have to be addressed
16 as a part of the investment in a build situation.

17 This graph gives a brief overview of some of
18 what we have heard from you as a part of the study are
19 the major concerns in terms of how you would recommend
20 that a decision be evaluated.

21 So at the first of the list we have
22 acquisition and displacements. The symbols there are
23 a plus symbol that represents better, a minus symbol
24 that represents worse and then a circle which suggests
25 that the alternative is neutral in evaluation on that

1 category.

2 So on displacements and acquisitions, Wheeler
3 to MLK alignment gets the better evaluation, as well
4 as on capital cost, the community support that we've
5 heard in support of the Wheeler to MLK -- Wheeler to
6 MLK alignment option. The traffic on willow to MLK
7 gets a better evaluation.

8 And then if you look at ridership it has a
9 better circumstance of ridership on the Scott to
10 Griggs alignment. Potential development is higher and
11 graded as a better scenario on Scott to Griggs. Land
12 use is graded as better on Scott to Griggs,
13 parklands.

14 And then we have the HAZMAT high risk sites,
15 and you have the plus going to the Wheeler-MLK
16 alignment.

17 As Karen mentioned to you a little bit
18 earlier, you can do your -- you can submit comments in
19 a written form. This is the information in terms of
20 where that documentation would need to be sent and
21 postmarked by September 11th. It is also on a display
22 board out front if you don't already have that. It's
23 also in the newsletter. If you received the
24 newsletter in the mail, then you'll have that there as
25 well as they are available at the front. So there are

1 a number of places where you can pull this
2 information, as well as being able to make comments
3 on-line at METRO's web site at www.ridemetro.org and
4 go to/contact/comment.asp, and then, of course,
5 tonight here at the public hearing by signing up with
6 the yellow cards and turning those in.

7 In final, basically our comment process for
8 this evening, Mr. Sedlak will go through the process
9 and allow the officials that are present to speak, and
10 then following that the speakers that have signed up
11 will be -- will have that opportunity to make their
12 comments for the official records, and everyone that
13 signs up and speaks will be allowed the two minutes,
14 and all of those comments will be recorded as a part
15 of this evening.

16 MR. SEDLAK: Raquelle, thank you very much.
17 Again, that was a brief summary. As I believe most of
18 you in the room know, this process has been ongoing
19 for some time with a significant number of public
20 meetings and a significant amount of participation
21 that we've had from the community with a lot of input
22 in this process, and we appreciate that.

23 I'd like to start the public comment process
24 first by calling upon Marnine Thomas representing
25 Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee's office. Marnine.

1 MS. THOMAS: Good evening, Mr. Sedlak, board
2 members. Thank you for the opportunity to offer these
3 comments regarding the METRO Solutions program. I
4 offer these comments pursuant to notice and comment
5 process set forth in the Federal Transit
6 Administration.

7 As a member of Congress whose district will
8 be impacted significantly by the transit projects
9 comprising the METRO Solutions program, I am a strong
10 supporter of this program. In these days of
11 \$3-per-gallon gasoline and turbulence in the Middle
12 East, it has never been more important to lessen this
13 nation's dependence on foreign oil supplies than it is
14 now.

15 Increased usage of available, convenient,
16 efficient and affordable public transportation in
17 Houston and Harris County is an idea whose time has
18 come. If all of the key stakeholders work together,
19 the METRO Solutions program has the potential to
20 generate substantial public benefits in the areas of
21 environmental protection, economic development,
22 transportation safety and homeland security.

23 The METRO solutions program is a system of
24 interrelated projects, some of which are federally
25 funded and some locally funded. It is an integrated

1 program that includes four distinct BRT routes, one
2 light rail line, two intermodal centers and an
3 extension of the Main Street line.

4 The first package that will be ready for
5 construction includes two federally-funded routes, the
6 North and Southeast BRT lines. METRO secured
7 significant authorization for funding and special
8 language in the TEA-LU bill for this program.

9 Last year my colleagues in the Houston area
10 congressional delegation and I committed the
11 support -- committed to support this program with an
12 effort to secure \$1 billion in Federal funds for over
13 the next 10 years. Over the last four years, we have
14 secured over \$38 million dollars for METRO in Federal
15 funding for this program alone.

16 The southeast line will connect downtown
17 Houston with Palm Center. The total length is
18 approximately 6.8 miles. The Draft Environmental
19 Impact Statement, the DEIS, has been circulated for
20 comment. Conceptual engineering is underway.

21 It is my understanding that METRO does not
22 anticipate entering into a traditional design/build
23 process. Instead, in accordance with local
24 legislation, the Southeast Corridor is to be built
25 through a project development contract that will

1 design and build the system to a fixed budget on a
2 fixed schedule.

3 This line will be built under the same
4 contract as the North Line BRT. Total cost for the
5 Southeast Corridor is budgeted at \$203 million, and it
6 is anticipated that a record of decision will be
7 executed by November 2006 and the full funding grant
8 agreement should be executed by July 2007.

9 I understand, also, that while METRO intends
10 to pursue a very aggressive schedule on each corridor,
11 it is still in the initial stages of work on the
12 university corridor light rail line.

13 The DEIS is about to commence and conceptual
14 engineering to help determine the alignments is
15 scheduled to begin soon. Among other things, the
16 conceptual engineering process will consider and
17 evaluate traffic impacts, cost, ridership and public
18 input.

19 Thank you again for this opportunity to share
20 my views on this very important public investment in
21 the future of our community. I look forward to
22 working with you, other local officials and my
23 colleagues in Congress to make the METRO Solutions
24 project a success and a model of the economic,
25 governmental, political and social cooperation needed

1 to move our nation forward.

2 My Houston staff is available to provide
3 input and assist in achievement of our mutual goals.

4 Very truly yours, Member of Congress Sheila Jackson
5 Lee.

6 MR. SEDLAK: Marnine, thank you very much,
7 and please express thanks to the congresswoman for the
8 continued support she provides to METRO, and she has
9 done that for quite some time. Thank you.

10 Next I'd like to call to the microphone State
11 Representative Garnet Coleman.

12 MR. COLEMAN: Thank you very much, and I want
13 to thank METRO for going through these long processes
14 but important processes in terms of allowing the
15 community to make the determination about how their
16 tax dollars are spent and how transit affects their
17 communities, not only where it is in the community but
18 also where it takes them when they're going to other
19 places, and it's extremely important.

20 We put together a process, there's some
21 others here, but it was Ada Edwards, the counsel
22 member for District D and the past commission to look
23 at the challenges on the Southeast Line when it came
24 to running the rail line down Scott south between
25 Wheeler and OST and the impact that that would have on

1 residential -- residential.

2 And clearly the scoring that was put on the
3 screen showed that the taking of homes actually
4 reduced by using the alternative that would go at
5 Scott to Wheeler to MLK and then to Griggs and
6 terminating at the railroad tracks at Mykawa Road.

7 Clearly there's some loss of economic
8 development, because you lose the pieces between Scott
9 and MLK going up Griggs, but there's a proposal,
10 obviously, by METRO to use signature bus to move from
11 that portion over to the medical center with an
12 express bus system.

13 Because of the loss of those development
14 opportunities, it would be nice to see that signature
15 bus line upgraded to create that -- that connection
16 between the portions going towards Hobby Airport and
17 the medical center, and I think that, over time, can
18 alleviate the problem of losing the opportunities on
19 that commercial corridor.

20 So I want to thank you for considering that,
21 and clearly, since the task force worked very hard on
22 that, that's a recommendation that I have and coming
23 from working with neighborhoods and, of course,
24 working with METRO that I wanted to add to upgrade
25 that signature bus piece.

1 The other thing is as you move through the
2 process on the Southeast Line that there be more
3 discussion about how the Southeast Line and the
4 University's Line -- University Line converges,
5 because that is an unresolved question the way that
6 line terminates as it comes to Scott Street and passes
7 TSU and U of H.

8 Other than that, I will listen to my
9 constituents as to the information that they get from
10 this hearing, but I do want to thank METRO, and from
11 what I can see looking at it, as long as you use those
12 dotted lines, it looks pretty good to me, and I thank
13 you. Thank you all very much.

14 MR. SEDLAK: Representative, thank you for
15 being here, thank you for your comments and thanks for
16 your hard work at the State legislature. I know
17 that's coming up next year. Thank you.

18 REPRESENTATIVE COLEMAN: Yes, sir. Thank
19 you.

20 MR. SEDLAK: Our next three speakers I'll
21 call in order, and I'd like you to then come up to the
22 microphone. You'll have two minutes. Karen Marshall
23 will give you some indication as you approach the
24 two-minute end of your time. Norm Pegram is the first
25 speaker followed by Dan Nip and followed by Jim

1 Olive. So our first speaker, Norm Pegram, if you
2 could come to the speaker -- the microphone.

3 MR. PEGRAM: Good evening. My name is Norm
4 Pegram. I'm the owner of International Mailing
5 Systems located at 815 Live Oak within the East
6 Downtown Houston Management District. I have worked
7 and owned property and lived in this area known as
8 Chinatown for the past 30 years. I am also the
9 chairman of the board for the East Downtown Houston
10 Management District.

11 Our boundaries are Highway U.S. 59 on the
12 west, IH 45, Gulf Freeway, on the south and the
13 Southern Pacific Railroad that runs on a triangle on
14 the north side.

15 Our immediate neighbors are the Downtown
16 Management District, the Greater East End Management
17 District, the Midtown Management District and the
18 Southeast Management District.

19 Upon reviewing the Draft Environmental Impact
20 Statement for the Southeast Corridor, we have several
21 concerns from our board. Since my involvement,
22 firstly it is unclear that METRO ever presented
23 information to the East Downtown Management District
24 during this DEIS process. It is our understanding
25 that the presentations were made to the East Downtown

1 Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, the TIRZ. The TIRZ
2 is a separate entity from us, although it is within
3 our district boundaries, but it does not represent our
4 district or its total constituency.

5 Additionally, if the meetings were not held
6 with the district board members themselves, METRO
7 cannot and should not conclude that our board was
8 informed of this project.

9 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, you have 30 seconds.

10 MR. PEGRAM: Second, in regards to the line
11 as it proceeds south from the Capital along the
12 Southern Pacific Railroad east it traverses through
13 parcels of property with new major residential
14 development which during the past two years our area
15 has begun and will continue to transition from the old
16 warehouse district to a residential.

17 Third, the two stations down Leland do very
18 little, if anything, to serve this new core
19 residential development and business sections of our
20 district.

21 MS. MARSHALL: Sorry, your time has expired.

22 MR. PEGRAM: Fourth, the district stations
23 don't allow for any kind of interface with the bus
24 system or the two METRO east-west routes that run
25 through this area.

1 We would like to indicate, though, we do
2 support this effort and that we really are proud that
3 it is going through our area, and we do want to see it
4 happen. We just feel that there might be a little bit
5 of tweaking.

6 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Norm. Appreciate the
7 comments.

8 Next speaker is Dan Nip.

9 MR. NIP: Good evening. My name is Dan Nip,
10 and I have been working and owning property in the
11 east downtown area for over 25 years, and I'm also
12 serving on the same board that Norm does, the East
13 Downtown Management District, and I'm also the
14 chairman of the East Downtown TIRZ.

15 As stated by Norm, there are many issues to
16 be considered upon review of the Southeast Draft
17 Environmental Impact Statement. Certainly the
18 apparent situation where East Downtown Management
19 District received minimal contact from METRO is
20 important, and I ask the question as to whether all
21 interest groups along the corridor were given equal
22 weight, attention and differences in the public
23 involvement process where issues of alignment and
24 station location were discussed and determined.

25 In my time period, I would like to focus on

1 the issue of the alignment and station locations as it
2 relates to the development of this area. It is clear
3 that the alignment would need to be modified due to
4 the impact to private property with significant
5 acquisitions that would be necessary --

6 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, you have 30 seconds.

7 MR. NIP: -- to construct the current
8 alignment through the East Downtown Management
9 District area. More importantly, though, is how the
10 alignment is to be modified as a mitigation measure.
11 Certainly METRO would want the station and alignment
12 to reach the highest patronage. If so, then alignment
13 and station location would need to focus on the center
14 of the core --

15 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, your time has expired.

16 MR. NIP: -- of the district where
17 significant residential development is occurring. In
18 reviewing past records for the district from early
19 2002 to 2003 -- I'm sorry, 2002 to 2006, we found that
20 vacant or underutilized residential and commercial
21 properties valued at \$1.8 million in 2002 are now
22 valued in 2006 at 31.5 million --

23 MR. SEDLAK: Dan, if you could try to wrap
24 up.

25 MR. NIP: -- as new residential. The

1 developments are in the core of the district for the
2 most part and more residential construction is
3 currently underway.

4 The east Downtown Management District and the
5 First Ward support METRO. We ask that the district
6 board be provided an opportunity to meet with the
7 appropriate METRO planning and engineer staff to
8 discuss the alignment and station issues. Thank you.

9 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you very much.

10 Next speaker is Mr. Jim Olive.

11 MR. OLIVE: Good evening. My name is Jim
12 Olive, and I am a property owner in the east downtown
13 area. I'm a member of the board of the East Downtown
14 Houston District as Dan and Norm. As a board member,
15 I have focused the majority of my interest on
16 beautification of east downtown.

17 As stated by Norm Pegram, upon review of the
18 Southeast DEIS, there are many issues to be
19 considered, and I will echo the concerns of my board
20 regarding the minimum contact we have received from
21 METRO through this multiyear DEIS process.

22 The district was created in 1999 and is now
23 in the verge of our district service plan to continue
24 operations in the future. In doing so, we have become
25 reinvigorated with the great possibilities for more

1 urban style residential and retail commercial
2 development.

3 Transit and mobility is an important
4 component to our growth, and so it is important that
5 the transit system in the district is interconnected
6 and has maximum accessibility to residents and
7 businesses.

8 Currently there are two east-west routes that
9 traverse through the center of the district, the 36
10 Lawndale and the 40 Telephone. Bus 36 travels on
11 McKinney and 40 travels on Polk. The 15 Harrisburg
12 also goes through our district but at the northern
13 end. Neither station on the southeast alignment
14 provides transfer opportunities for these routes.

15 Our preference would be for METRO to examine
16 an alignment that transitions south from Capital on a
17 street that is west of the current alignment --

18 MS. MARSHALL: You have 30 seconds.

19 MR. OLIVE: -- where a station can be located
20 near either McKinney or Polk before transitioning in
21 an easterly direction to Scott and the Leland
22 station.

23 At Chairman Pegram's request, we are
24 anticipating to meet with METRO on these issues. The
25 East Downtown Houston board of directors supports

1 METRO. We ask that the district board be provided
2 with an opportunity to meet with the appropriate METRO
3 planning and engineering staff to discuss the
4 alignment issue --

5 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, your time has expired.

6 MR. OLIVE: -- as well as discuss the
7 additional station in the core and the vicinity of
8 these two routes. I appreciate your time. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you very much, Jim.
11 Appreciate those comments.

12 We had a speaker Dannie Simmons signed up to
13 speak, but then I had a note, "Decided not to speak."
14 Is that true?

15 Okay. So our next three speakers in the
16 order that they've signed up is Kelvin Williams,
17 Malcolm Wells and Dr. Teddy McDavid.

18 Kelvin Williams, please. Kelvin.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Good evening.

20 MR. SEDLAK: Nice to see you.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: I done been to so many public
22 hearings and giving testimony and everything, but
23 will y'all please build something?

24 MR. SEDLAK: Well, we are, Kelvin. We are,
25 Kelvin.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah, I remember when there
2 was \$700 million in y'all's coffers, and y'all blew
3 that money. Mayor Bob spent the money and county
4 commissioners spent the money. Please build
5 something. Thank you.

6 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Kelvin. Thank you
7 for coming.

8 Next speaker, Malcolm Wells. Mr. Wells.

9 MR. WELLS: Good evening.

10 MR. SEDLAK: Good evening.

11 MR. WELLS: I have a couple of questions that
12 I don't know if you can interact on here or just --

13 MR. SEDLAK: We're really hear to receive
14 comments tonight, and some staff might be here --

15 MR. WELLS: Someone should put some answers
16 out to some of these questions.

17 MR. SEDLAK: Sure.

18 MR. WELLS: One question is about ridership.
19 So how do you calculate ridership? I reviewed a lot
20 of your documents about purpose and need, and one of
21 the things that I still am not clear on is what
22 determines your need to put anything in any area. I'm
23 not disagreeing that there is a need, but please
24 elaborate on what need is present.

25 When I passed out and the area that I am

1 specifically referring to is between Wheeler and
2 Griggs. That's the part that I am concerned about.
3 And when I pass down there every day, I don't see
4 busses leaving people, because there's not enough room
5 on them. So I don't understand what the need is to
6 dig up and take homes and businesses and that sort of
7 thing.

8 So I'm trying to understand the ridership,
9 the need, and then, according to your documents, as
10 well, you are supposed to be trying to address the
11 University Corridor, at least this part of it by TSU,
12 University of Houston and business in the Palm Center
13 area.

14 And so from my personal perspective, that
15 does not mean that you need to come down Scott to
16 Griggs in order to hit that. So your -- as your
17 document even says, that it is your potential for
18 development, things that are going to maybe benefit
19 our area but specifically benefit METRO.

20 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, you have 30 seconds.

21 MR. WELLS: That's fine. That the route that
22 goes outside of the neighborhoods where you are
23 displacing these homes that may not be historic by
24 technical definition but have been a part of our
25 district for a period of time. And so, again, it is

1 my suggestion that we take the route of the dotted
2 line as well and go with that one. I agree with
3 them.

4 MR. SEDLAK: Malcolm, thank you. I want to
5 make sure, though, you're aware there are staff -- we
6 had staff here earlier this evening. There are
7 staff. They have a METRO badge on. If you'd like to
8 get one of the staff members and consultants --

9 MR. WELLS: I feel comfortable with you
10 pointing me to different people to get answers --

11 MR. SEDLAK: Okay. Well, let's get one of
12 them again, and maybe afterwards I can speak to you,
13 too. Thank you.

14 Yes. Dr. Teddy McDavid, please.

15 DR. MCDAVID: Yes, I am Teddy McDavid, and
16 I'm president of the OST Community Partnership. That
17 is an umbrella organization for several civic clubs
18 stemming from McGregor through Sunnyside, Southpark,
19 South Union, et cetera. I come to you on behalf of
20 this coalition of city club leaders and business
21 owners on OST, Griggs, et cetera, et cetera.

22 We are and have been for the last 15 or 20
23 years fighting for the revitalization of the area,
24 especially through corridor development. We know that
25 you know that Scott Street is the only corridor that

1 goes from one end of Houston to the other. Simply
2 put, it is the corridor on which you should focus
3 major redevelopment.

4 We see light rail as one of the tools -- and
5 I know we're going to get the bus first and all of
6 that sort of thing -- as one of the tools to help us
7 foster the revitalization of that area.

8 We have surveys. We've taken scientific
9 surveys to tell us that the business owners are
10 looking and hoping for that tool to help them market
11 and revitalize and stimulate their own businesses.

12 You've heard all of the key words, the proper
13 words, mobility, transportation, all key things to
14 help boost that area. Change is always very, very
15 difficult. Change is hard. It is an inconvenience.

16 MS. MARSHALL: Doctor, 30 seconds.

17 DR. MCDAVID: We expect that kind of
18 inconvenience if indeed we are going to preserve the
19 integrity of the neighborhood as well as revitalize
20 that area. Thank you.

21 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Dr. McDavid.
22 Appreciate you being here. Next three speakers in
23 order are Gordon Dash, John M. Bell, Sr. and Minister
24 Robert Muhammad. Gordon Dash, please. Thank you,
25 Gordon.

1 MR. DASH: Good evening, I'm a resident of
2 Palm Street at Scott, and I'm going to be, I guess,
3 very impacted by this project.

4 MR. SEDLAK: Could you speak a little closer
5 to the mike? Thank you, Gordon.

6 MR. DASH: Okay. Currently the way the plan
7 has it now, there's going to be a large section of
8 homes, particularly mine, from Blodgett all the way
9 over to McGregor that's going to be severely impacted
10 on how we access our homes. I didn't see anywhere in
11 DEIS how METRO is proposing that we mitigate these
12 problems. So that's one issue that I wanted to see
13 METRO provide a recommendation for us.

14 That was pretty much my main concern, really,
15 about the whole system. I am in support of it. I do
16 believe that we should put the light rail system in
17 there. I've looked around at the bus system, and it
18 didn't provide enough detail of what the bus system is
19 going to be. Is it going to be the typical bus that
20 you see on the street now? If that's the case, then
21 there's going to be a lot of noise and environmental
22 impacts that I don't think are addressed with the bus
23 system.

24 So if they can provide more detail on the bus
25 system and what effect that's going to have on that

1 section of town, I would really appreciate that.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Gordon. Appreciate
4 it.

5 Next speaker, John M. Bell, Sr.

6 MR. BELL: Yes, thank you. I have several
7 concerns in regard to the alignment of the University
8 Corridor as well as the first alternative going down
9 Scott to Wheeler.

10 My experience with the rail that exists now,
11 it has basically divided the city east and west.
12 Streets that I used to have to my access to go from
13 west to east are no longer there. They've been cut
14 over 70 percent.

15 And I see the alignment that you have coming
16 down Scott almost doing the same thing, creating a
17 separate little entity that has no room for economic
18 development, and especially so if there is no real
19 connection of the University Line to -- to the Scott
20 corridor.

21 And I'm concerned that the fabric of our
22 neighborhoods will be eroded as we see it. Those of
23 us who remain therein become into a project area with
24 no likelihood for that economic development that we
25 voted for during METRO's push to push light rail.

1 And at this point I feel that we have been
2 abandoned by this METRO board when it comes to their
3 plans to include and to be inclusive as to not to --

4 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, you have 30 seconds.

5 MR. BELL: -- not to disrupt our community
6 but to make it so that we'll all benefit from it and
7 not just a few.

8 So hopefully those concerns will be addressed
9 when you do make that connection for the university
10 rail to the Scott corridor, how they did to not
11 disenfranchise. Thank you.

12 MR. SEDLAK: Mr. Bell, I can assure you you
13 have not been abandoned by this METRO board, as
14 evidenced by the three members here this evening
15 listening intently to your comments. I thank you for
16 them, and we are taking all your comments seriously.

17 Minister Robert Muhammad.

18 MINISTER MUHAMMAD: I'm Minister Robert
19 Muhammad, Mosque No. 45, 4443 Old Spanish Trail. I
20 also serve on the Southeast Management District. I'm
21 also a graduate of Texas Southern University School of
22 Public Affairs and Urban Planning and a Ph.D. student
23 presently.

24 I want to address equity. If we're going to
25 build this line, the most equitable alternative to

1 consider in the DEIS is light rail. The reasons are
2 as follows: The southeast is the most
3 transportation-dependent population in the METRO
4 service area. The southeast has the largest
5 percentage of METRO's ridership. The voters in
6 southeast voted for METRO's mobility referendum
7 believing they were voting for light rail. METRO's
8 June 2005 announcement that a BRT alternative was
9 being considered for the Southeast Corridor was met
10 with disappointment and anger.

11 Only METRO's assurances that the same
12 infrastructure that would accompany light rail would
13 be constructed with BRT helped the process to move
14 forward.

15 The community's willingness to accept BRT
16 hinges upon being converted to light rail when the
17 ridership threshold is met. Therefore, the next most
18 equitable alternative, given FTA's funding parameters,
19 would be BRT convertible.

20 In addition, the community urges METRO to
21 acquire the necessary land during this phase to place
22 the power stations for future LRT conversion. Future
23 land costs to build the power stations after the line
24 is built will only serve to hinder conversion to light
25 rail.

1 Lastly, the routes under consideration are
2 all vital. The most equitable route in terms of
3 right-of-way acquisitions, business and traffic
4 disruptions and the cost is the
5 Scott-Wheeler-MLK-Griggs route.

6 Any ridership deficits or land use for
7 development opportunities that are lost can be
8 corrected by constructing an additional transit center
9 along the Wheeler-MLK-Griggs route and also adding a
10 signature bus route, express route, going up and down
11 OST.

12 Our special thanks from the community to
13 Karen Marshall of METRO, Tonya Washington, formerly of
14 METRO, now with Parsons Brinckerhoff, and Raquelle
15 Wooten Lewis of Parson Brinckerhoff --

16 MS. MARSHALL: Time has expired.

17 MINISTER MUHAMMAD: -- for their hard work in
18 the community to get us to this point in the process.
19 And please build something.

20 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Minister Muhammad.
21 Appreciate your comments.

22 Our next three speakers in order are Diane
23 Sheffield, Richard Elbein followed by Wallace
24 Honeywell. Ms. Sheffield, please.

25 MS. SHEFFIELD: Can I put this down for me?

1 MR. SEDLAK: Yes, you certainly may.

2 MS. SHEFFIELD: Thank you so very much. I'd
3 like to say good evening to everyone.

4 MR. SEDLAK: Good evening.

5 MS. SHEFFIELD: I know this is an important
6 meeting, and this is an important meeting to me. I am
7 living at the present at Cuney Homes and representing
8 over a thousand residents there, and, yes, we have
9 many, many bus riders there going all directions.

10 In the late 80's, early 90's, I congratulate
11 I think Ms. Ruby Mosley that was working with us to
12 get those different bus routes around Cuney Homes
13 allowing a person to go whatever direction they did
14 without having to walk to the bus. We thank METRO
15 that made a decision to go on and do that.

16 And now with the light rail system coming
17 close to our, you know, way, we will be able to get on
18 it. I'm just hoping that it will be a good benefit
19 for the residents that already use a lot of your
20 busses to go to the different places where they need
21 to go.

22 Only -- I know it's a question, but I'm just
23 going to put it out there, and we'll deal with it as
24 we may. My concern is my neighborhood. Cuney Homes
25 is public housing residents -- I mean, public housing

1 property under the umbrella of the housing authority,
2 the Houston Housing Authority. I'm concerned about
3 safety and security. Okay? I don't know who I need
4 to talk to about that.

5 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

6 MS. SHEFFIELD: I don't know, you know, what
7 direction we need to go, because I missed a lot of the
8 last meetings, but that's my concern. I'm concerned
9 about the safety and security of the neighborhood once
10 we get it going, and, yes, if you're going to do it,
11 you might as well go on and do it.

12 MR. SEDLAK: I appreciate your comments very
13 much, Ms. Sheffield.

14 Next speaker, Richard Elbein. Richard.

15 MR. ELBEIN: Good evening. My name is
16 Richard Elbein. I've been a resident on Charleston
17 off Scott for the last 24 years, and when I moved in,
18 Scott was a two-lane street and was converted to a
19 four-lane with an esplanade down the center. It was
20 quite disruptive for traffic, and I'm sure some of the
21 homes along Scott were disrupted by that progress, but
22 I think now we all celebrate the fact that it's a
23 better road because of it and there's better
24 transportation.

25 I hope that the light rail or whatever

1 becomes the rail comes down Scott, and the reason is
2 that Scott is the street that is most traveled in that
3 area. It also is -- goes through the neighborhoods
4 with the greatest population density.

5 And I happen to work in elder services, and
6 we focus on aging in place, and you can't age in place
7 if you don't have transportation. And I can tell you
8 I, a much younger person than the people we serve,
9 don't walk two blocks for about six months out of the
10 year, because it's too hot.

11 I can't imagine people in those neighborhoods
12 trying to get to the transportation to get downtown or
13 be able to get to services. So I hope that we won't
14 avoid population just because of the disruption it may
15 cause. Thank you.

16 MR. SEDLAK: Richard, thank you for your
17 comments.

18 Next speaker, Wallace Honeywell. Wallace.

19 MR. HONEYWELL: Good evening. My name is
20 Wallace Honeywell. I'm a homeowner in the Parker
21 Drive Civic Club area. I'm currently president of
22 that group; however, I speak tonight not representing
23 the group, because there's been no formal survey of
24 our civic club to find out what all the members
25 think. I know there's a variety of opinions.

1 Personally, I favor building the light rail
2 system down Scott Street, and the reasons are mostly
3 supporting the economic development in the community.
4 I've lived in this community for almost 40 years, and
5 I see the momentum that's been built up by the recent
6 development of the center, the economic center at Old
7 Spanish Trail and Scott Street. I'd like to see this
8 continue.

9 We also, in the neighborhood -- we were
10 promised -- we voted for light rail. We won't have
11 that immediately, and I understand the reason why.
12 The ridership issue is a principal issue. The Scott
13 Street alternative supports this issue, and I think it
14 will bring us -- if we have it down Scott Street, I
15 think it will bring us more quickly to the light rail
16 alternative, which we would like. Thank you.

17 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you very much, sir.

18 Our next three speakers in this order, Janice
19 Stanton Hines, Otis H. King, followed by Gwendolyn
20 Gaines. Janice Stanton Hines, please.

21 MS. HINES: Good evening. Thank you for
22 coming out today.

23 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you.

24 MS. HINES: We appreciate you having it here
25 and a good opportunity to make public comment. I live

1 on Charleston, also, a little further down from my
2 previous neighbor, and I'm concerned because I walk
3 that neighborhood, it's a beautiful neighborhood, and
4 light rail, of course, would be helpful, but I don't
5 think it should go from Wheeler all the way down to
6 Griggs.

7 I think it would be too disruptive to the
8 numerous homes there. I think your population density
9 is right there at University of Houston, Texas
10 Southern. So I think the best route would be Scott to
11 Wheeler and Wheeler over to Griggs and Palm Center.

12 I do not want METRO to disrupt the beautiful
13 Riverside Terrace any further. We currently have a
14 great deal of noise from the freeway, 288. There are
15 a lot of people who live in Pearland. It's much
16 noisier on the highway, and I think that it would be
17 much more disruptive if we have the rail coming at the
18 opposite end of us down Scott.

19 So I hope that it will only go Scott to
20 Wheeler, Wheeler to Griggs and then over to Palm
21 Center. Thank you so much.

22 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Hines.

23 MS. HINES: Somebody else can have the
24 microphone now.

25 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Hines.

1 Mr. Otis King.

2 MR. KING: My name is Otis King, and I live
3 on Parkwood. I worked for the City of Houston during
4 the Hofheinz administration, and we were having this
5 same kind of discussion. At the rate we're going,
6 we'll have a system in about 300 years, because that
7 was 30 years ago, in 1976, and we're still talking
8 about it.

9 So what I'd like to say is, you know, I do
10 some work as an arbitrator also, and I like to say
11 that I may not always be right, but I'm never in
12 doubt. And I'd like to say the same thing to the
13 board. You have a tough decision to make, and I think
14 you ought to make a principled decision undeterred by
15 politics or politicians and undeterred by the personal
16 prejudices of the residents who may be affected.

17 A rail system is a system for the ages. I
18 think the Metro in Paris was built about, what, 160
19 years ago, the New York subway system 120 years ago.
20 And so you are looking at building a system that's
21 going to be injected into the future for about 250
22 years.

23 So what I would say to you is make a careful
24 decision, and whatever decision you make has to make
25 sense. I've looked at the material that's been

1 presented, and to me it makes sense to go down Scott
2 Street all the way to Griggs. That may not be the
3 most popular decision you can make, but you have to
4 live with the decision, and you have to determine,
5 after you've made it, when you're explaining it to
6 your grandkids and other people who are going to be
7 looking at what you've done, did it make sense.

8 So I would simply say to you to make a
9 principled decision. Don't be afraid of where the
10 chips may fall. Make a decision that makes sense.
11 And I agree with Brother Muhammad, let's build
12 something.

13 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Mr. King.

14 Ms. Gwendolyn Gaines?

15 MS. GAINES: I will pass. My concerns have
16 been addressed.

17 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Gaines. Our next
18 three speakers in order are Nata Koerber, Christyna
19 Rice, followed by Juanita Outley Harris. So Nata
20 Koerber or Koerber. Please excuse my pronunciation.

21 MS. KOERBER: Good evening, everyone. My
22 name is Nata Koerber, and I live at 3110 Southmore.
23 I've been a resident of Third Ward for over 20 years.
24 I am in favor of the Southeast Corridor route
25 preferring light rail turning on Wheeler to MLK.

1 There's one thing I want everyone to remember, and
2 it's a number. It's 130, 130 feet to put in the
3 infrastructure for rail.

4 Now, the studies have shown that if rail goes
5 straight down Scott, Scott does not have 130 feet.
6 When we talk about tell our grandchildren, don't we
7 want our grandchildren to still be able to live
8 there?

9 I believe that by making that turn on Wheeler
10 and MLK, there will not be a significant loss of
11 ridership because of both University of Houston and
12 Texas Southern and development that will be taking
13 place down MLK. It will reduce the likelihood of
14 disrupting the character of the community and the
15 destruction of affordable housing and increasing taxes
16 to residents by displacing current properties and
17 residents and putting in \$300,000 townhomes that many
18 of the senior citizens will not be able to afford.

19 We only need to look at other examples of how
20 people --

21 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

22 MS. KOERBER: -- use progress and position to
23 displace people in Fourth Ward, Midtown and Main
24 Street close to where I used to live. In all cases, I
25 urge METRO to be mindful of the goal of reducing

1 traffic on larger corridors such as OST or Elgin
2 rather than being driven by developers who use METRO
3 initiatives to acquire properties on narrow
4 residential streets and displace homeowners for the
5 wealthy in the name of progress.

6 MS. MARSHALL: Time.

7 MS. KOERBER: Lastly, some have commented
8 that change is inconvenient, but when it displaces
9 residents, sometimes change is just 30 pieces of
10 silver. Thank you.

11 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Koerber. If I
12 could ask the audience to abstain from the response,
13 it will help us get through the rest of the speakers.

14 Ms. Christyna Rice, please. Ms. Rice.

15 MS. RICE: Thank you. I'm Christyna Rice. I
16 live at 6211 Culberson. So I'm in the neighborhood
17 near OST and Scott. It's a beautiful neighborhood,
18 just like my neighbors have said. We are -- my
19 household, the neighbors that I've spoken with who
20 have sent in written comments, are for light rail.
21 Actually, they're for any kind of rapid bus transit
22 that gets us downtown where our jobs are, preferring
23 light rail.

24 We prefer the Scott-Griggs alignment. It has
25 the most impact on our community, and I'm sure that's

1 why it's been controversial, but the impact can be a
2 positive impact. I will be able to walk and those in
3 my neighborhood and the apartments right across the
4 street next to my elementary school can walk to the
5 rail and get downtown and get where we need to go.

6 And so I think that your initial assessment
7 was correct, and I appreciate the comments and taking
8 the time so the community can get behind the efforts.
9 And now I look forward to the decision being made,
10 whatever your decision. Thank you.

11 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Rice.

12 Next speaker Juanita Outley Harris.

13 Ms. Harris.

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. I am Juanita Outley
15 Harris, a member and secretary of the Riverside
16 Homeowners Civic Club. I own the properties located
17 at 2419 Wichita Street and 2503 Wichita in the loop.
18 I have been in the Riverside area for 50 years.

19 I support the idea of the light rail system,
20 but I would like to completely delete the idea of the
21 light rail traveling down Wheeler Avenue. As you can
22 recall, Wheeler Avenue near Texas Southern University
23 was closed years ago due to the tremendous dangers
24 from the student body. It will be too noisy, also.
25 Please forget the idea about traveling down Wheeler

1 Avenue.

2 Scott is -- Scott Street is unfavorable, too,
3 due to Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. We have a
4 tremendous population of members. It is already
5 frightening when we depart from the church. Placing
6 light rail down Scott will be unsafe. Scott Street is
7 also too narrow for light rail.

8 I would suggest that the light rail will go
9 down Elgin to Calhoun and Calhoun to Griggs. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Harris.

12 Our next three speakers will be Reverend
13 Fana, I hope I pronounced that correctly, Nathaniel
14 Pitoniak, followed by Olevia Randle. Reverend Fana.

15 REV. FANA: Good evening. I'm here to
16 represent the McGregor Place Civic Club and the
17 Operational Unity Network. I live at 5500 Martin
18 Luther King Boulevard, and I just want to keep it
19 brief so everybody can speak.

20 My main concern is that we look forward to
21 rail, because we voted for rail, and we wanted rail to
22 come down Martin Luther King. And the reason why is
23 because of the size of Martin Luther King Boulevard.
24 We can put rail on Martin Luther King without taking
25 anybody's house, and we can put rail all the way down

1 to Griggs and head on out to the airport.

2 And the thing that makes the neighborhood the
3 neighborhood when we come back on Scott and you don't
4 want it to go down Wheeler is that you're talking
5 about taking people's houses.

6 The question of ridership is not a question
7 that's significant because of this. We have
8 development going on on Martin Luther King that's
9 going to bring new riders. We've got condos going up
10 on Martin Luther King. We've got development going
11 on. We've got a whole new park that goes through,
12 MacGregor Park, that's going to have ridership. We've
13 got a brand new YMCA that's coming to the neighborhood
14 that's going to bring ridership. What we're saying is
15 you have a whole sling of students who go to Yates and
16 come down MLK who will all be riding rail to get to
17 where they want to go.

18 We say why tear up the neighborhood on Scott
19 Street. Why tear up people's houses? Why have people
20 where they can't get across the street? Why do that
21 when you can just come on down, come on down Martin
22 Luther King, three lanes on both sides of the street?

23 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, you have 30 seconds.

24 REV. FANA: She has a nice way of saying
25 that. We're suggesting that you come down, make that

1 turn, come on down Martin Luther King, so we don't
2 have to tear up people's homes, we don't have to tear
3 up people's lives, and leave the neighborhood, which
4 is a beautiful neighborhood, as it is. Thank you for
5 your time.

6 MR. SEDLAK: Reverend, thank you very much.

7 Next speaker, Nathaniel Pitoniak.

8 Nathaniel.

9 MR. PITONIAK: Hi, my name is Nathaniel, and
10 I live close to Scott Street with my brother. I'm
11 a -- he owns a townhouse there, and I'm a third-year
12 law student, and I just wanted to voice my concerns.

13 This summer I went to Rome for the first
14 time. While I was there, when I got off the plane at
15 the airport, I had to go in via bus as opposed to
16 Paris and Amsterdam where I could have just taken a
17 train. And I asked a Sicilian guy who was setting
18 next to me on the bus, "Why don't you guys have rail
19 like they do?" And he said, "Well, every time we go
20 ahead and try to build something, we encounter a ruin
21 and construction has to stop, and it's gridlock,
22 basically."

23 Well, so that's a concern, but without
24 lessening the concerns of property -- property owners
25 in these areas, I think that there are no ruins on

1 Scott Street, and, I mean, no one's whose land is
2 being conversely condemned wants to hear about
3 sacrifice. They just assume -- I guess their response
4 is that well, why don't you just sacrifice and have
5 your land conversely possessed.

6 But I think this would be a significant step
7 towards eliminating urban blight. This is a direct
8 way to stem the effects of white flight. The positive
9 impact upon the socioeconomic environment would be
10 great. Gentrification might displace, but the net
11 benefit to those not displaced is undeniable.

12 Without knowing much about the two
13 alternatives, the salient feature about the Wheeler
14 alternative is that it goes right by U of H, and as an
15 U of H student I can attest to the fact that parking
16 there is terrible. I got a parking ticket yesterday
17 for parking illegally. And so if this many were in
18 effect, --

19 MS. MARSHALL: Time has expired.

20 MR. PITONIAK: -- I could just go to school
21 and then -- without taking my car, and then I could go
22 downtown and get drunk, which I think would be great,
23 because I wouldn't have to let the car keys go. Thank
24 you.

25 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you. Once again, if you

1 could hold the audience response so we can get to the
2 remaining speakers. Ms. Olevia Randle, please.

3 MS. RANDLE: I'm Olevia Randle, and, first of
4 all, I'd like to go on the record of saying that I did
5 not vote for the BRT busses. I just don't understand
6 that, and it shouldn't be if we're going to have rail
7 and we voted for the rail like they have on Main
8 Street. It's just like, you know, if you say we've
9 got a loaf of bread, we get one slice, and you get the
10 rest. So that's kind of hard.

11 And also I don't approve of a station being
12 presented there at Palm Center. I do not think it
13 should be right near a crush rock where they have the
14 particles and things coming. So that means everyone
15 that would get on the train on Griggs-Martin Luther
16 King will get a dose of those particles.

17 I'm sure you all have seen the Southern
18 Crushed Concrete where they have those big piles, and
19 are y'all really considering that, or is it just on
20 paper? I would like to know that. And because I
21 thought it was going to go to the freeway or even
22 maybe it could go straight down to airport and go to
23 airport --

24 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

25 MS. RANDLE: Go to the airport. So -- but

1 I'm not in favor of it being in Palm Center, which
2 would take up part of the parking lot, and it's
3 already full. So that would be -- that wouldn't be a
4 good idea.

5 MR. SEDLAK: Ms. Randle, there may be a staff
6 member that can answer that question, give you
7 specific information with the METRO tag in the back of
8 the room. Okay?

9 The next three speakers, Mrs. Louis C. Ray,
10 Carroll Robinson and Debra Washington. Mrs. Ray,
11 please.

12 MRS. RAY: Good evening.

13 MR. SEDLAK: Good evening.

14 MRS. RAY: And thank you, METRO, for giving
15 me an opportunity to speak as a homeowner on Wheeler
16 Street. I apologize to everyone on this, because I'm
17 not abreast to what all the plans are. So I'm only
18 here to oppose rail for my benefit. I am -- as a
19 homeowner on Wheeler Street.

20 I integrated to this area in the 40s when it
21 was called Sugar Hill. So I'm older than anybody else
22 in this area. I attended -- I'm a graduate of TSU,
23 and we closed TSU years ago because it created a poor
24 environment for the students at the university. So we
25 closed it years ago. Okay? I would like to see that

1 opened again.

2 Secondly, I would not like to see the rail
3 come down Wheeler Street. I'm a homeowner on Wheeler
4 Street. It would displace too many homeowners and
5 then again create a poor environment for the students
6 in the university.

7 So I want to let it be known that I oppose
8 you having rail coming down Wheeler Street or creating
9 a poor environment for the university. And I think I
10 have a right to say that, because I'm older than
11 anybody in this neighborhood. You understand what I'm
12 saying? Wasn't anybody else like me when I moved in
13 this neighborhood. Okay?

14 All right, then. So it's right for me to be
15 concerned not only as a homeowner but others in this
16 neighborhood and the type of environment it would
17 create for the elderly people and for the schools and
18 university. So I oppose rail coming down Wheeler
19 Street, and I apologize for not knowing what all the
20 plans are, but I wanted you to know that.

21 MR. SEDLAK: Well, we thank you for your
22 comments and coming here this evening.

23 Carroll Robinson.

24 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you very much.

25 Somewhere down the line I wanted to give someone my

1 total written comments, but I wanted to start off by
2 acknowledging that the tone and tenure of this meeting
3 in terms of its productivity is due in large part to
4 Counsel Member Edwards and State Representative Garnet
5 Coleman and the folks from METRO. You came and you
6 listened when we said we had a concern. I'm not going
7 to take the issue on which route it ought to be, but
8 when you read the DEIS, my comments concern this.

9 There are significant connectivity issues as
10 to the downtown corridor, how you're going to connect
11 into the existing Main Street line, how you're going
12 to connect into the new extension. There are
13 connectivity issues. There are no discussions about
14 how the Southeast Corridor connects into the
15 University line, and that needs to be done. There is
16 about one sentence dealing with the bus connectivity
17 and transfer.

18 The last point I'd make from my point of view
19 is whatever we do, whether we go to the OST Transit
20 Center or we go to Palm Center, please make it a real
21 transit center. Last time I was out there to check on
22 something you were asking the public about, you
23 couldn't even buy a stick of gum. You couldn't use
24 the rest room. You couldn't buy a can of Coke.

25 And so if we're really going to use this as a

1 system, then these transit centers ought to be real,
2 multi-use facilities that enhance the overall impact
3 and benefit of the system.

4 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

5 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you very much. So
6 should I give this to him?

7 MR. SEDLAK: Yes, please.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Last thing. No signs, but we
9 don't want to be held hostage on the east side. We
10 may have slight disagreements about the routing, but
11 clearly you've heard tonight that we want rail and we
12 don't want to wait on anybody else's disagreement
13 before we get what we believe we have supported and
14 are entitled to.

15 MR. SEDLAK: Next speaker is Debra
16 Washington. Debra.

17 MS. WASHINGTON: My name is Debra
18 Washington. I'm a resident at 3626 Seabrook Street
19 and I am for Griggs instead of the Wheeler route. One
20 of the reasons I am for Griggs is because of the
21 institute I would like to recognize. And I'm
22 considered a big, I guess, by-product of that area.
23 Slavery is part of my heritage, and the area coming
24 from McGregor all the way over to Griggs was symbolic
25 of families who had come out of oppressed environments

1 and made it.

2 So I am thinking that just like we have the
3 medical center, we have the historical markers in the
4 concrete that says how various medicines were
5 discovered or who discovered it, I would like for me
6 to be recognized by having the METRO rail coming over
7 McGregor and turning on Griggs so that we can look at
8 that area and say these were the families that once,
9 like mine, my father, used to deliver medicines in
10 that area. He now owns a home there. He's also a
11 realtor. And my little nephew has told me if he's not
12 a multimillionaire realtor in one year, he'll be
13 dead.

14 And so my father, along with other families
15 like the Edwards -- Reverend Al Edwards father was a
16 big realtor in that area, sold homes to my now
17 business owner, the Nelsons. And Mr. Nelson was an
18 entrepreneur, and he had one of the best --

19 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

20 MS. WASHINGTON: -- places to entertain here
21 in Houston. And even since I've been in there in the
22 last six years, I've seen Tyrone Davis come in and Mel
23 Waiters. And when segregation was a big part of
24 Houston, it was down Scott Street that the
25 entertainment took place. And the recognition of what

1 families had come out of, you know, poverty, the
2 Jolivettes, they were 54 years there, and their
3 daughter died on Scott Street after helping her father
4 run a business. So I'm very proud of my heritage.

5 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you very much. Our next
6 speakers, and I'll list the four that I have signed up
7 here, Gloria Gutierrez, Lee Mercer, Barry Klein and
8 Dannie Simmons. Gloria Gutierrez. Go ahead.

9 MS. GUTIERREZ: Good evening. My name is
10 Gloria Gutierrez. Thank you for giving us the
11 opportunity to express views.

12 MR. SEDLAK: Could you pull the mike down a
13 little bit more? Thank you.

14 MS. GUTIERREZ: Thank you. My name is Gloria
15 Gutierrez. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to
16 be here. I'm a native Houstonian. I'm a graduate of
17 Texas Southern University, and I'm considered Hispanic
18 but with black in my roots. I'm in favor of equality
19 for everybody.

20 I can remember back in the days of 1960, back
21 when I was an undergrad at Texas Southern University,
22 I was very proud to say that my roommate was the cause
23 of the white flight. Her family was the first family
24 in McGregor. She told me of all the horrors that's
25 been done to her and her family.

1 Being raised as Hispanic with black roots, my
2 dad, who's a doctor in the family, could not go to a
3 place and eat. Instead, he would send me to buy the
4 food for him. I was pushed from water fountain to
5 water fountain, because I was too white to be in the
6 black water fountain, and once they knew that my
7 father was black, the white people pushed me back to
8 the black water fountain.

9 When I -- when my dad would go to school and
10 bring my lunch, if I was sitting in the front row, as
11 soon as my dad left the class I was sat -- asked to be
12 seated in the back row of school.

13 So I have experiences to go with my whole
14 life. I can say that I was part of -- I can say I was
15 part of the revolution at Texas Southern University,
16 because I was very outspoken. Today I have -- well,
17 I'm happy to say I have a very long qualifications to
18 my experience. I've been a constable, teacher, I've
19 been in the convent, I've been -- presently I'm the --

20 MS. MARSHALL: Time has expired.

21 MR. SEDLAK: Wrap up in about 30 seconds.

22 MS. GUTIERREZ: I have experienced the white
23 flight, and we are experiencing the gentrification.
24 Our parents, our grandparents and our relatives are
25 being forced out of the homes because of the higher

1 taxes. They worked hard for their properties. Now
2 we're seeing these minimansions coming in. Their
3 homes that are appraised for 50,000 now have gone up
4 to 200,000.

5 With the minirail that we have right now --
6 with the rail plans that we have right now, it's going
7 to force a lot more people out of their homes. And we
8 claim this to be our home, because we have worked hard
9 for it. Our parents and our grandparents have worked
10 30 years of hard labor for this.

11 I do believe that we do have METRO here more
12 for everybody than just one section of the
13 population. I am a member of the HPRA, UPOA and other
14 clubs in Houston.

15 MR. SEDLAK: Could you bring it to a
16 conclusion?

17 MS. GUTIERREZ: My conclusion is that I've
18 also seen the effects of the electrical that cause
19 human beings cancer. The electrical towers have
20 caused brain tumors in people. That has been a fact.
21 Where are we going to put these electrical towers to
22 run this rail through here? Who's going to be the
23 next person that's going to get brain cancer from
24 these effects. What areas is that going to be located
25 at? I just wanted to bring those issues up.

1 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Ms. Gutierrez.
2 Appreciate it.

3 Lee Mercer, please.

4 MR. MERCER: I'd like to say good
5 afternoon/good evening to everyone.

6 MR. SEDLAK: Good evening.

7 MR. MERCER: My name is Lee Mercer, and I'm
8 here today --

9 MR. SEDLAK: Could you raise the microphone a
10 little bit, Mr. Mercer? Thank you.

11 MR. MERCER: Thank you. I have applied for
12 the president of the United States of America, and I
13 have developed community development. I've been
14 developing in this area for the last 13, 14 years.
15 I'm undercover intelligence, and there is a special
16 program from the University of Texas to West Point
17 ROTC. The government needed executives, so they hired
18 executives to go in and serve in the war, and I became
19 an executive in intelligence in San Antonio, Texas to
20 University of Texas where I still am. I do work for
21 the City of Houston but in a different capacity.

22 And I'd like to say there are some things
23 that we're doing that is in development that you don't
24 know about. You probably know about it, but really
25 don't know about it, because of the capacity of what

1 the government is doing. And my program is the best
2 program there is, it's affordable.

3 And when METRO started back some years ago,
4 METRO was just started, I had plus or minus for
5 METRO. I really didn't like the idea of METRO,
6 because I'm a Houstonian. I've been here 30 years.
7 I'm from east Texas. But the people that I did
8 support and the people that I'm talking about me
9 supporting --

10 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

11 MR. MERCER: -- are here in Houston. So I'm
12 just standing here tonight because I am in the
13 community, and I'm trying to let you know who I am,
14 and there's a lot of things you need to talk to me
15 about development so I can expose myself.

16 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Mr. Mercer.
17 Appreciate it.

18 Next speaker is Barry Klein. Barry.

19 MR. KLEIN: Yeah, how are you doing? I'm
20 Barry Klein. I'm the president of Houston Property
21 Rights Association and a member of the Northside
22 Coalition that's opposing the BRT in whole.

23 I'd like to explain what our primary
24 objections are to the proposal to extend the guideway
25 program. In Harris County we have a 15,000-mile road

1 system, and METRO we're running a 3,000-mile bus
2 program, and you're talking about spending 5 billion
3 dollars to replace roughly a hundred miles of bus
4 service with a hundred miles of guideway service,
5 whether it be rail or BRT, and it's quite foolish.
6 You don't need to do that.

7 You already have the bus program. You're
8 actually making things worse for yourself, because
9 you're losing ridership by forcing the bus riders to
10 go to train stations where they have to transfer.
11 That causes them to leave the system if they have a
12 car at home.

13 I wanted to point out some problems I have
14 with the way you're presenting your case for your
15 build options. The law requires you to look at a
16 no-build option, which is basically expanding the bus
17 service, and, of course, you do have that in the Draft
18 Environmental Impact Statement, but you don't make it
19 very evident on your boards. So people are misled
20 into thinking that their only options are to accept
21 some form of the build. So I think you're actually
22 misrepresenting the nature of choices that the
23 citizens have.

24 Also I want to talk about the fact that
25 you're hiding from people the fact that --

1 MS. MARSHALL: 30 seconds.

2 MR. KLEIN: -- you're going to be building a
3 terminal on the north side and forcing many of your
4 riders to take additional time and go through two
5 additional stops to transfer if they're headed
6 downtown for part of this route. And I think that
7 should be not separated out from what you're talking
8 about here but should be part of the discussion.

9 And also I want to point out that where you
10 put rail you've actually brought blight. Anybody that
11 goes to that Main Street south of Pierce Elevated can
12 see the businesses destroyed, --

13 MS. MARSHALL: Sir, your time has expired.

14 MR. KLEIN: -- and they have not come back.
15 Thank you.

16 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Mr. Klein.

17 The last speaker that I have signed up is
18 Mr. Dannie Simmons. Ms. Dannie Simmons.

19 MS. SIMMONS: Good evening, everyone. My
20 name is Dannie Simmons. I'm president of Oak Manor
21 Civic Club. That's from South McGregor -- or from
22 North McGregor to Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church on the
23 front side.

24 The reason that I'm asking that you be
25 concerned and be compassionate about coming down Scott

1 all the way to Griggs is because of the fact from
2 Southmore to Ruth Street, those are all dead-end
3 streets, and there is a lot of senior citizens that's
4 been in there 35 to 40 years or more, and they're
5 still living in that area.

6 And if you think about coming down Scott,
7 you're going to have to take some more area, because
8 the -- more street, because it's going to be too
9 narrow. If you take our homes on the front, you're
10 also going to have to think about the back, too,
11 because the back streets are all closed in. That
12 means you're going to have to give us a way out -- in
13 and out.

14 So I'm asking you to please take this into
15 consideration when you're talking about coming down
16 Scott Street.

17 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you very much, Ms.
18 Simmons. At this point I'd like to ask if there are
19 any speakers that have not signed up that would like
20 to speak. You have that opportunity to come forward.
21 You have two minutes. I'd like you to state your name
22 for the record. So I invite anyone that would like to
23 make public comment here. If you wouldn't want to
24 speak before the microphone, you have that opportunity
25 to submit a written comment. Sir, would you like to

1 speak?

2 MR. BROUSSARD: Yes. Yes, good evening.

3 MR. SEDLAK: Good evening, sir.

4 MR. BROUSSARD: I would like to say that I
5 walked the route from Wheeler to Palm Center --

6 MR. SEDLAK: Could you speak a closer to the
7 mike?

8 MR. BROUSSARD: Yes, I'd like to say I walked
9 the route from Wheeler -- from Scott down Wheeler to
10 MLK to Palm Center, and I looked -- I looked and I
11 really believe that is not the best route. I do
12 believe because the greatest benefit can be derived by
13 going Scott to Griggs because of connectivity issues
14 that someone brought up earlier that would help us
15 further south, and that's where I live. That was my
16 concern.

17 I think that -- I think light rail -- and I
18 hope you do -- I hope you do build light rail and not
19 BRT. I think light rail would so energize our
20 neighborhoods south going down Scott to Beldart. I
21 saw an alternative plan that I would have to opt --
22 even though I think it would be more disruptive going
23 down Scott Street, I would have to opt for Scott.
24 Thank you very much.

25 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, sir. Did I have your

1 name, sir? Did I get --

2 MR. BROUSSARD: Oh, I'm sorry.

3 MR. SEDLAK: I'm sorry.

4 MR. BROUSSARD: My name is Cleveland
5 Broussard. I'm president of the Brookhaven Civic
6 Club.

7 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, Mr. Broussard.
8 Appreciate that.

9 Do I have another speaker? Yes, sir. Get
10 your name, please.

11 MR. AUBREY: My name is Homer Aubrey. I'm a
12 member of the Oak Manor/University Woods Civic Club.

13 MR. SEDLAK: Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. AUBREY: I live on Gertin Street, which
15 is three doors off Scott, and we've seen homes
16 affected by widening Scott. And now if rail comes
17 down Scott all the way to Griggs, most likely all my
18 neighbors would have to lose their homes, because you
19 would have to get more property.

20 I am one of those people who worked hard to
21 canvas our neighborhood to get signatures, and all
22 those things were submitted to METRO maybe two years
23 ago when we thought of this first service.

24 I'm here also just to say that our civic club
25 endorses the alternate down Wheeler to Martin Luther

1 King and not to come down Scott to Griggs. Thank
2 you.

3 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you, sir.

4 Are there any other members of the audience
5 that would like to make comment? You have that
6 opportunity, again, to make comment formally through
7 the written comment process. So I believe then we're
8 bringing the hearing to closure. I'd like to thank
9 our board members, Ms. Louis Richman --

10 MS. KIZZEE: Could I speak?

11 MR. SEDLAK: Yes, ma'am, you have the
12 opportunity --

13 MS. KIZZEE: I couldn't leave without saying
14 my piece.

15 MR. SEDLAK: Could you state your name,
16 please?

17 MS. KIZZEE: My name is Reba Kizzee. I have
18 lived at 3869 Wentworth since 1960. So I am a rooted
19 member of the Third Ward community, and I want to tell
20 you that I'm adamantly, violently opposed to your
21 putting a rail down Scott Street. It makes no sense.
22 It will tear up the flavor of our neighborhood.

23 I don't give a damn about white flight. You
24 guys were there when we came. We were the second
25 black family on our street. There are no more white

1 families on that street, maybe one or two who are now
2 renting. So really that's not a concern to me.

3 My concern is the integrity of my
4 neighborhood, and I have lived there since 1960. I
5 have watched neighbors come and go. I have watched
6 neighbors die. It's a very peaceful, nice
7 neighborhood, and I am adamantly, adamantly opposed to
8 your putting rail down Scott Street. Thank you.

9 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you for the comments.

10 Yes, sir.

11 DR. WILLIAMS: It's been a long day. Good
12 evening. My name is Dr. Michael P. Williams, and I'm
13 the senior pastor of Joy Baptist Tabernacle on Griggs
14 Road and also a member of the Houston Community
15 College board of trustees representing this district.

16 One of the most important things beyond
17 routes and destinations in terms of this is the
18 ultimate development of this community and where METRO
19 stands in terms of spurring that development, and I
20 just hope that at some time during this process we can
21 have a serious discussion about all of METRO's public
22 plans, not just in terms -- there's a great bit of
23 land acquisition that's taking place in our
24 community. I live in this community, work in this
25 community, and what are the long-term plans in terms

1 of mixed-use development and a wide variety of other
2 issues that go along?

3 I think that anything that causes undue not
4 just convenience but actual displacement of people is
5 a very serious matter that needs to be discussed.

6 My church is right around the corner from the
7 MLK site, and it's certainly a wide open boulevard in
8 terms of doing that. But my longer concern is how
9 METRO is going to be a player in the long-term
10 development of that community.

11 So I hope that we when we get to that point
12 we can have some real serious discussions about that,
13 because I think that's going to be the real long-term,
14 strategic impact that affects the Southeast Corridor.
15 Thank you.

16 MR. SEDLAK: Thank you.

17 Okay. Seeing no other speakers, I'd like to
18 thank our board members, Ms. Richman, Mr. DeMontrond,
19 Mr. Freeman. Would any of you like to say anything to
20 the audience here this evening.

21 MS. RICHMAN: We're just glad that they came
22 out to visit. Glad they were here.

23 MR. SEDLAK: On the board's behalf, I thank
24 you very much for attending.

25 Karen would you like to close the public

1 hearing, do the official close?

2 MS. MARSHALL: Again, I want to thank
3 everybody for your attendance. You may still submit
4 written comments to Rhonda Boyer at the Metropolitan
5 Transit Authority, P.O. Box 61429, Houston, Texas.
6 They must be postmarked by September 11th. For anyone
7 who didn't choose to speak tonight but you would like
8 your comments in the official record, you still have
9 an opportunity to do that. Thank you very much for
10 your attendance and good night. This hearing is
11 closed.

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1 STATE OF TEXAS]

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COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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I, Shawn Kelley, a Certified Shorthand

6

Reporter within and for the State of Texas, hereby

7

certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy

8

of the public hearing.

9

I further certify that I am neither

10

attorney for, related to nor employed by any of

11

the parties in this matter, nor do I have a financial

12

interest in the matter.

13

Witness my hand September 2, 2006.

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Shawn Kelley, Texas CSR 3448*

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*My Certificate Expires December 31, 2007

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