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METRO  
NORTH CORRIDOR PUBLIC HEARING  
SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2008

HELD AT  
JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL  
1101 QUITMAN  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

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REPORTED BY: PAM GWIN CODER, CSR

1                   A P P E A R A N C E S

2    PANEL MEMBERS:

3  
4    GEORGE SMALLEY, Hearing Officer, Vice President Metro  
          Communications and Marketing

5    CARMEN ORTA, representative of the Metro board

6    MICHAEL MARTINEZ, representative of the Metro board

7    SANDY WESCH-SCHULZE, presenter

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1           MR. MARTINEZ: Okay. We're going to try  
2 this again. For those wishing to hear the presentation  
3 and the proceedings of the public hearing in Spanish,  
4 we have headsets with simultaneous translation in front  
5 of the auditorium. We ask that you please sign out the  
6 headsets before taking one, and we also ask that the  
7 headsets be returned at the end of the public hearing.

8           (Repeating in Spanish.)

9           At this time, we're going to call the  
10 public hearing to order. And I would like to introduce  
11 to you our hearing officer for today's North Corridor  
12 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement  
13 Public Hearing, and he is vice president of METRO's  
14 communications and marketing, George Smalley.

15           (Applause.)

16           MR. SMALLEY: The applause should really  
17 be for all of you for coming out today. Thank you for  
18 being here.

19           I'd like to begin by making some  
20 introductions. We have a number of elected officials  
21 and representatives who are elected officials here. We

22 thank them as well for coming out. If they would  
23 please stand when I call their name. Congressman Gene  
24 Green. Representing County Commissioner Sylvia Garcia,  
25 Mr. Robert Gallegos. Representing council member

1 Melissa Noriega, Mr. Shaun Stacey. Representing  
2 Senator Mario Gallegos is Mr. Ruben Landa. And we  
3 have two representatives from council member Adrian  
4 Garcia's office, Jose Rivera and Tanya McKinney. I  
5 hope I pronounced your names correctly.

6           Representing the Metropolitan Transit  
7 Authority board of directors to my left is Ms. Carmen  
8 Orta. We also have a former general board member in  
9 the audience today, Mr. Michael Chau. Where are you?  
10 Standing in the back. Thank you for joining us. And  
11 we also have with us the president and chief executive  
12 officer of METRO, Mr. Frank Wilson.

13           Let me state the purpose of the hearing  
14 today. It is straightforward. It is to receive  
15 comments on the North Corridor Supplemental Final  
16 Environmental Impact Statement. In addition to  
17 comments that we receive here today, we invite the  
18 public to submit written comments to Ms. Rhonda Boyer.  
19 Her name and address is out in the lobby area on the  
20 board. She can be reached at the Metropolitan Transit  
21 Authority, Harris County, Post Office Box 61429,

22 Houston, Texas, 77208. And the following point is  
23 important. Your comments, if you submit them by mail,  
24 need to be postmarked by or no later than June 9, 2008.  
25 Let me now turn to the procedures for the

1 hearing today. Again, they're pretty straightforward.  
2 We're going to begin in just a few moments with a  
3 approximately ten-minute presentation by Sandy  
4 Wesch-Schulze, who is sitting here at the head table.  
5 She will be summarizing the Supplemental Final  
6 Environmental Impact Statement. I will then invite  
7 Congressman Green and representatives of the elected  
8 officials if they have any remarks to make. And I  
9 would like to remind everyone that the comments are  
10 supposed to be limited to the North Corridor.

11 I will call the speakers to present  
12 comments based on the order in which they signed up to  
13 speak and turned in the speaker cards. And I will call  
14 them in groups of five. Once all of the registered  
15 speakers have made their comments, anyone who has not  
16 yet signed up to speak, but wishes to will be given an  
17 opportunity to comment.

18 I need to remind you that the verbal  
19 comments today need to be limited to 2 minutes. Our  
20 timekeeper is going to be Michael Martinez. You're  
21 going to see a yellow light blinking at 30 seconds

22 remaining and when your time has expired, you will see  
23 a red light and need to stop at that point. If you  
24 have brought with you comments in writing, we encourage  
25 you to submit them for the record in addition to your

1 verbal comments.

2 All comments received here today will be  
3 transcribed by a court reporter over there on the side  
4 and become part of the formal record of this hearing.  
5 Comments offered in Spanish will be translated into  
6 English and transcribed as well. And, again, written  
7 comments will be accepted for the record.

8 At this time, I'd like to turn it over to  
9 Sandy Wesch-Schulze, who will give about a ten-minute  
10 overview.

11 MS. WESCH-SCHULZE: Thank you. What I  
12 want to do is give a brief overview of the Supplemental  
13 Final Environmental Impact Statement. Some of the  
14 things we're going to discuss is the status of the  
15 project and the changes that have occurred since we  
16 were last out here in February or, actually, since the  
17 February 2007 Record of Decision or approval from the  
18 Federal Transit Administration and present the revised  
19 locally preferred alternative or LPA, and then as  
20 George said, an opportunity for you to comment on the  
21 revised LPA.

22                   We've mentioned several times that what  
23 we're here to comment on is a supplemental final  
24 environmental impact statement, but really, what is  
25 that? It is an environmental report that evaluates and

1 documents the social, economic, environmental, and  
2 transportation impacts to the revised project  
3 definition going from BRT-Convertible to LRT, which is  
4 Bus Rapid Transit to Light Rail Transit, along with  
5 mitigation measures.

6           The changes from BRT to LRT requires the  
7 development of this new supplemental environmental  
8 document and the issuance of a new Record of Decision  
9 from the Federal Transit Administration. The document  
10 that has been prepared is very similar to the other  
11 environmental documents METRO has prepared. What it  
12 helps do is facilitate the review of the project by  
13 federal, state and local agencies and the community.

14           The document also not only looks at the  
15 change from Bus Rapid Transit Convertible to LRT, but  
16 also there's been some design changes. I'm going to go  
17 through those. SFEIS is being circulated for a 30-day  
18 review and comment period ending June 9th. Following  
19 this review, the responses will be prepared to address  
20 the comments we've received and these responses will be  
21 included in an environmental approval from FTA, which

22 is called the Record of Decision.

23 I just want to briefly kind of give you a

24 timeline on how we got where we are today. METRO

25 conducted an Alternatives Analysis from August 2001 to

1 February 2004 to determine the locally preferred  
2 investment strategy for the North Corridor. In  
3 November 2003, the METRO Board of Directors approved an  
4 LRT alignment for the LPIS and established the section  
5 from the University of Houston Downtown Station to the  
6 Northline Mall as the initial phase of construction.

7           A draft Environmental Impact Statement  
8 was then prepared, and it also examined a number of  
9 modes and alternative options. In August 2006, the  
10 METRO Board of Directors selected Bus Rapid  
11 Transit-Convertible as an interim technology with the  
12 ultimate goal of implementing Light Rail when the  
13 ridership and growth warranted. This was based on the  
14 -- this was based on the findings of the DEIS and  
15 public comment. A final Environmental Impact Statement  
16 was then prepared to document this decision. The  
17 Federal Transit Administration issued federal approval  
18 for the project through the Record of Decision in  
19 February 2007.

20           Later that year in October, there was  
21 further analysis of the forecasted ridership and cost.

22 Based on that, the METRO Board of Directors modified  
23 the mode and selected Light Rail Transit as an initial  
24 technology for the North Corridor. In November of  
25 2007, the Federal Transit Administration determined

1 that the modification required the preparation of a  
2 Supplemental Finding Environmental Impact Statement and  
3 the issuance of a new environmental approval.

4           So what has changed? First, I want to  
5 mention most importantly what has not changed. The  
6 alignment has not changed. The alignment that was  
7 proposed for Bus Rapid Transit-Convertible is the same  
8 alignment that is being proposed for Light Rail. I've  
9 already mentioned that that's one of the big changes is  
10 the mode.

11           One of the other benefits is that  
12 changing from Bus Rapid Transit-Convertible to Light  
13 Rail will eliminate the need for a transfer at the  
14 Burnett Station between the two modes.

15           The typical section has been revised to a  
16 26-foot guideway with one 10- to 17-foot traffic lane  
17 in each direction with 6- to 10-foot parkways to reduce  
18 the number of displacements and property impacts while  
19 still maintaining the traffic level of service.

20           And in the December 2006 Final  
21 Environmental Impact Statement, it was estimated that

22 over 200 addresses would be impacted. The revised

23 design would impact less than 100 properties.

24 This also translates into fewer impacts

25 to historic properties. The previous BRT design

1 impacted 14 historic properties. The LRT would impact  
2 eight.

3           To better serve the community, two  
4 stations have been added, and one station has been  
5 revised. The Boundary and the Graceland Stations have  
6 been added. The Moody Station has been shifted south  
7 of Cavalcade Street and renamed to the Cavalcade  
8 Station. I want you to please also note that the  
9 Catherine Station has been renamed the Moody Park  
10 Station and the Fulton/610 Station has been renamed to  
11 the Melbourne Station.

12           And one other change is because of the --  
13 because of initially constructing LRT, five Traction  
14 Power Substations, or TPSSs, will be required at  
15 approximately one-mile intervals along the alignment to  
16 supply electrical power.

17           This is an example of what one of these  
18 TPSSs look like. They do not generate electricity.  
19 What they do is basically convert electrical currents  
20 to the appropriate level to power the LRT vehicles.  
21 These sites are about 80 feet by 100 feet.

22                   As I mentioned, the Supplemental Final  
23 Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared. This  
24 document follows the National Environmental Policy Act,  
25 or NEPA, to identify and assess the potential effects

1 on the human and natural environment. It's also  
2 consistent with the requirements of other national  
3 policies, regulations and executive orders.

4           Just briefly, I want to go through some  
5 of the findings of it. Starting out, there are no  
6 adverse effects to the social, air quality, parkland,  
7 geology, soils, hazardous or regulated materials sites,  
8 parking, freight rail, or trucking. However, there are  
9 some categories or elements that could be affected or  
10 will be affected.

11           Under "Land Use." During the development  
12 of the design, the engineering team has worked to avoid  
13 or minimize the need for property acquisition. For the  
14 most part, the proposed improvements can be  
15 accommodated within the existing street rights-of-way.  
16 However, the design will require the acquisition of 5.2  
17 acres of land. 10 residential and 16 commercial  
18 properties will be displaced.

19           The North Corridor is a federally-funded  
20 corridor, which requires the agency and its agents to  
21 strictly adhere to the Federal Uniform Relocation

22 Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act  
23 of 1970, as amended, and also FTA guidelines. This  
24 requires that certain policies and procedures be  
25 followed, such as, meetings with landowners, offers are

1 to be in writing, and independent appraisers are to be  
2 reviewed by another independent party.

3           It also sets forth the guidance on  
4 eligibility as well as benefits for businesses, tenants  
5 and residential persons who are being relocated due to  
6 the project. METRO has met with all the landowners  
7 along the North Corridor that have property to be  
8 acquired, as well as the majority of the persons who  
9 will be displaced by the project.

10           Both the noise and vibration analyses  
11 were conducted in accordance with FTA guidance for the  
12 project. The noise study showed impacts at nine  
13 locations, impacting 30 residences. Noise walls and  
14 bell orientation have been proposed as mitigation. The  
15 noise study showed an impact at one non-residential  
16 location. Mitigation will be implemented at that  
17 location, if found to be reasonable and feasible.

18           For visual impacts, the project would  
19 introduce new visual elements within a modern urban  
20 setting. These new elements are predominantly located  
21 along the elevated section along Fulton Street over the

22 HB&T Railroad and along Moody Park. No substantial  
23 adverse visual effects are anticipated. Mitigation to  
24 adjacent sensitive receptors will be mitigated through  
25 landscaping, where feasible and consistent with safety

1 requirements.

2           For ecosystems, the vegetation that will  
3 be directly impacted by the construction of the project  
4 will be primarily within the existing roadway  
5 rights-of-way, and it does include two large trees.  
6 Mitigation measures for the loss of trees will be  
7 incorporated into the landscape design for the project.  
8 Mitigation includes a commitment to further assess and  
9 plan for tree preservation and replacement for damages  
10 unavoidable in accordance with the City of Houston Tree  
11 and Shrub Ordinance.

12           The alignment will also traverse the  
13 hundred-year floodplain at one location at the  
14 confluence of White Oak Bayou and Buffalo Bayou.  
15 Approximately 6,500 cubic yards of fill will need to be  
16 placed below the 100-year water surface elevation.  
17 METRO will adhere to governing FEMA and City of Houston  
18 requirements regarding the alterations of mapped  
19 floodplains.

20           As I mentioned before, the alignment will  
21 require the acquisition of right-of-way from six

22 historic properties that are contributing to a historic  
23 district and will displace two properties that are  
24 contributing to a historic district. METRO has drafted  
25 an amendment to the December 2006 Memorandum of

1 Agreement with the Texas Historical Commission and the  
2 Federal Transit Administration regarding mitigation  
3 measures for historic properties.

4           The design of the LRT includes hardscape  
5 and traffic signal improvements. While implementation  
6 of the LRT will not create an inherently unsafe  
7 condition, METRO and the Houston Independent School  
8 District are coordinating on additional measures at  
9 schools adjacent to the alignment to ensure the safety  
10 of the children. Safety measures will be provided at  
11 enhanced controlled intersections to discourage  
12 unauthorized crossing of the fixed guideway.

13           METRO's transit system will experience an  
14 increase in ridership, passenger miles and passenger  
15 hours from LRT as compared to the No Build Alternative.  
16 Transit riders could save about 5 to 15 minutes along  
17 the entire corridor in comparison to No Build  
18 condition.

19           Because of the potential for impacting  
20 traffic flow by reducing the number of travel lanes,  
21 the level of service, or LOS, for signalized

22 intersections along the LRT alignment were analyzed  
23 using existing traffic counts and 2025 projected  
24 traffic volumes. The LOS analysis for LRT showed there  
25 would be one intersection at Fulton and the southbound

1 service road of 610 where the LOS, or the level of  
2 service, will potentially be reduced by two levels in  
3 the evening peak but would be improved by one level of  
4 service in the morning.

5 The analysis also showed eight  
6 intersections that will potentially be reduced by one  
7 level of service in the morning and nine would be  
8 reduced by one level of service in the evening.

9 Mitigation measures include improving the current  
10 intersection at Fulton and Crosstimbers Street with  
11 dual left-turn lanes.

12 The existing bicycle lanes on Fulton  
13 between Irvington Boulevard and Crosstimbers will be  
14 relocated to accommodate the fixed guideway because of  
15 restricted right-of-way. The bicycle lane will be  
16 relocated along Irvington Boulevard. The guideway will  
17 be primarily constructed in major streets  
18 rights-of-way, which are currently impeding  
19 traffic/pedestrian movements. The pedestrian movements  
20 will be directed to signalized intersections.

21 Again, this is just a very brief summary

22 of what's in the document. It is not to -- it is not  
23 all-inclusive. If you'd like more information about  
24 these topics, the analysis or findings, I would refer  
25 you to the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact

1 Statement.

2 Just briefly looking at the tentative  
3 schedule, following the circulation of the Supplemental  
4 Filing of the Environmental Impact Statement, a Record  
5 of Decision may be issued by the FTA this summer. The  
6 Record of Decision is a requirement by the FTA to enter  
7 into final design and continue right-of-way  
8 acquisition. It is anticipated that construction could  
9 begin in late 2008, and the line could be opened for  
10 service in 2012.

11 As already mentioned, submission of  
12 comments, there's several ways you can do that.  
13 Written comments can be left at the comment box as you  
14 leave today. They can be dropped off at the North  
15 Corridor project office, mailed to METRO, or submitted  
16 online. To become part of the public record, all  
17 written comments must be delivered to Metro or  
18 postmarked by June 9th, 2008.

19 I'll now turn the presentation back over  
20 to George.

21 MR. SMALLEY: As I stated earlier, I'd

22 like to begin now by offering elected officials an  
23 opportunity to make comments at that microphone to my  
24 left. Congressman Green, did you wish to make any  
25 comments today?

1 (No response.)

2 MR. SMALLEY: I don't see him. The  
3 representatives of other elected officials, if you  
4 would like to speak, the microphone is yours. If you  
5 could just identify yourself if you wish to speak.

6 (No response.)

7 MR. SMALLEY: Okay. Thank you. We will  
8 now move on then to the public speakers. I will call  
9 the first five speakers and ask that you come up here  
10 in the front and be seated. And when you do -- when I  
11 call your name to speak, if you would please state your  
12 name and also state your address.

13 So again, I will call the first five  
14 speakers and invite them to the front row, please.  
15 Rebecca Reyna, Ed Reyes, Wayne Fowkes, Armando  
16 Bermudez, and Gene Goins.

17 And the first speaker -- again, a yellow  
18 light will go on when you have 30 seconds remaining.  
19 The red light will go on when your time has expired.  
20 Would you please state your name and address?

21 MS. REBECCA REYNA: My name is -- my name

22 is Rebecca Reyna. My address is 6219 Irvington, Suite  
23 B. That's 77022. I'm with Greater Northside  
24 Management District. I'm here today on behalf of  
25 myself and our board of directors to voice our support

1 for LRT on the North Corridor. We have been and will  
2 continue to work with Metro to ensure that the  
3 businesses along the corridor are informed and kept  
4 aware of the progress. And we are hopeful that Metro  
5 will use the construction method that is -- that least  
6 impacts the businesses along the corridor.

7 We are looking forward to riding the rail  
8 one day along North Main. And, I think, urge Metro to  
9 work on making it successful for the whole community.  
10 We've talked about having walkable corridors. And I  
11 know the management district is ready to work with  
12 other entities in the community to make sure LRT is  
13 successful for the whole community, for the residents,  
14 the businesses, and the whole Northside community.  
15 Thank you.

16 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you for your  
17 comments, Ms. Reyna. Mr. Ed Reyes?

18 MR. ED REYES: Good afternoon. My name  
19 is Ed Reyes. Address is 218 Joyce Street. And I'm  
20 also with the management district and also with Lindale  
21 Park Civic Club. I'm here in support of the LRT as

22 well. Everything that Rebecca said, I echo it.

23 I also want to emphasize the education of

24 the students that go to the elementary school. I know

25 Metro is working already with some of the elementaries

1 as far as bringing safety into the classroom. With the  
2 train going by -- I think it's three schools or three  
3 elementaries -- it's important that the little ones are  
4 very educated about this -- the light rail and how the  
5 crossings will take place, as well as the grown-ups in  
6 driving around the area, too, because it's going to  
7 impact our community as far as getting across Fulton  
8 Street and so forth. But, again, in support of the  
9 rail. And we're ready to ride it. Thank you.

10 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Reyes.  
11 Wayne Fowkes?

12 MR. WAYNE FOWKES: My name is Wayne  
13 Fowkes. I'm with the Lindale Park Civic Club. My  
14 address is 515 Eleanor. I'm here to also lend the  
15 support to the LRT. I appreciate you're making an  
16 effort to do the LRT rather than the BRT, affecting us  
17 once -- not affecting us twice in the construction  
18 process. And also would just like to thank the staff,  
19 who I had the opportunity to visit with for their  
20 interest, their personal involvement, and the way  
21 they've dealt with people that have been displaced or

22 relocated and also for providing some of the safety

23 courses. Thank you.

24 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Fowkes.

25 Mr. Bermudez?

1           MR. ARMANDO BERMUDEZ: My name is Armando  
2 Bermudez. And I live at 405 James Street, 77009. I'm  
3 the president of the Near Northside BOND Organization.  
4 First of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Mike Martinez for  
5 keeping us involved and informed of the things that --  
6 with the light rail.

7           My main concern right now is the clinics  
8 that we have here on North Main. We need to have  
9 adequate intersections for the fire department, EMS to  
10 be -- have access to the clinics. We have a lot of  
11 patients coming across North Main. So I'd like to have  
12 that taken care of to make sure they don't have any  
13 problems, because I do support the light rail. Thank  
14 you.

15           MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, sir. Before I  
16 call the fifth speaker, let me invite the next five  
17 speakers to come and join us in the front, please. Ron  
18 Robles, Connie Hernandez, Pat Spencer, Debbie Allen,  
19 and George Rodriguez. If you could please come up in  
20 front.

21           At this time, I'd like to call our fifth

22 speaker, Gene Goins.

23 MR. GENE GOINS: I found out I've grown a

24 little bit since a teenager. (Laughter.) Close to the

25 microphone, she says.

1           Okay. My name is Gene Goins. I live at  
2 3410 Robertson Street on the inner north side. I've  
3 been out here for 52 years. I've raised seven children  
4 -- my wife and I have raised seven children. And none  
5 of us in jail. And I don't have any grandkids that I  
6 don't know about, I think. So I'm in pretty good  
7 shape.

8           Now, getting on with this. We've got  
9 Metro now. It's been working since the late '80s.  
10 It's -- we have definite routing now and some  
11 right-of-way. What I'd like to see is something that  
12 Mando mentioned. We do need adequate, safe walking  
13 across tracks at designated spots because we do have a  
14 lot of schools out there. We've got a lot of places  
15 where younger people go. And I think we need adequate  
16 safety for them, especially around the clinics and what  
17 have you.

18           The only other thing I'm going to say is  
19 let's get it on. I want to use my Q card. And thank  
20 you. And God bless us all.

21           MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Goins. Ron

22 Robles?

23 MR. RON ROBLES: Hello. My name is Ron

24 Robles. And I live at 2324 North Main. How many

25 people got here on the bus today? Anybody here from

1 the bus? Everybody drove cars? How did you get here?

2 By car? Anybody walk?

3 I think Metro should show a good example,  
4 and they should have drove here on a bus -- on a Metro  
5 bus. Really. I really think Mr. Wilson -- I guess he  
6 left again. I think that he should ride the Metro Park  
7 and Ride since he lives in Missouri City, and he works  
8 downtown. That would be very good. But to show an  
9 example and not ride the bus to come to this meeting,  
10 is not very good. All of y'all should have rode the  
11 bus.

12 And our safety is concerning to the  
13 children at school. And still to this day -- I think  
14 last -- in 2006, when Mario and I went door to door to  
15 invite the people of the community here, there's not  
16 even half the people here. I was too busy, I guess,  
17 working this year.

18 And so I don't think -- who will ride the  
19 Metro bus, or train, when it comes here? Who's going  
20 to ride that? How many hands do I see? How many will  
21 not ride it? Now, if I would have invited all the

22 people that I invited in 2006, you'd see a lot more  
23 hands. So I just don't think it's too good a project  
24 at this time. And I don't think it's a good idea.  
25 That's all I've got to say.

1 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Robles.

2 Thank you. Connie Hernandez?

3 MS. CONNIE HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon.

4 My name is Connie Hernandez. And I have a property at

5 0 Fulton, at the corner of Milwaukee and Fulton. I

6 just want to make sure that myself, as a property

7 owner, is going to get a letter or a phone call, should

8 my property get impacted in any way. All the

9 information that is offered this morning that there's

10 -- might be partial right-of-way, will we get at least

11 a letter, or a phone call, or something?

12 MR. SMALLEY: Yes.

13 MS. CONNIE HERNANDEZ: That was my

14 concern. I know other people have already been

15 contacted. I haven't. I'm right on the rail line.

16 And of course, I have a concern, you know, being the

17 owner. I just had that comment. Thank you.

18 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you. Pat Spencer?

19 MS. PAT SPENCER: Hi. I'm Pat Spencer.

20 I have a small business at 3901 Billingsley. I'm very

21 supportive of the LRT and glad that we're going to do a

22 one-step process instead of a two. I'd like -- if we  
23 ever have anymore of these meetings, it's much better  
24 for me to have it on a weekday when I'm in the  
25 neighborhood. I have to come from my home, which was

1 some distance away.

2 I was a little bit confused in your  
3 presentation. You had something on the screen which  
4 looked like a power station that are going to be in  
5 one-mile intervals or something. Are these underground  
6 or above ground? And are they landscaped? And would  
7 you address that?

8 MR. SMALLEY: What I'd invite you to do,  
9 Ms. Spencer, is after you finish speaking, or at the  
10 end of the hearing, to visit with some of the staff and  
11 consultants that were in the adjacent room, and they  
12 can answer your questions.

13 MS. PAT SPENCER: Okay. All right.  
14 Thank you.

15 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you. Debbie Allen?

16 MS. DEBBIE ALLEN: Hello. My name is  
17 Debbie Allen. And I'm the president of the  
18 Pleasantville Environmental Coalition. Although I  
19 don't live in this area, I have family members in this  
20 area that are very excited about the light rail.

21 MR. SMALLEY: Ma'am, what is your

22 address, please, for the record?

23 MS. DEBBIE ALLEN: I am sorry. My

24 address is P.O. Box 24322, Houston, 77229.

25 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you.

1 MS. DEBBIE ALLEN: And being involved  
2 with the environment, I'm just curious as to the  
3 environmental enhancements that would be developed. If  
4 someone could just get back with me on that. Thank  
5 you.

6 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you. Before I call  
7 our next speaker, let me invite the next five, if there  
8 are five. I have two names. I'll look to the staff  
9 now. Are there additional names beyond this here?

10 (No response.)

11 MR. SMALLEY: Okay. Let me call the --  
12 Mario Umanzor and Lynnett Tello. If you would please  
13 sit down in front, we will call your name momentarily.

14 Mr. George Rodriguez? Is George  
15 Rodriguez still here?

16 (No response.)

17 MR. SMALLEY: Okay. We will move on then  
18 to Mario Umanzor.

19 MR. MARIO UMANZOR: My name is Mario  
20 Umanzor. I have a business on North Main. Since I  
21 have been in this -- going against this project, I have

22 noticed a lack of communication between Metro and the  
23 people of the neighborhood. As we can see, we don't  
24 have too many residents of the neighborhood.

25 I just found out that it seems to -- that

1 I am in the wrong place today. I am not part of the  
2 North Corridor. I was told that you already had  
3 meetings about the mall terminal, and I was not  
4 invited.

5 Two things I want to mention. Okay. We  
6 want physical addresses of the people who support this  
7 project. We don't want P.O. Boxes. Another thing, the  
8 ones that support the project should be careful with  
9 what they wish for because their time is up, because --

10 MR. MARTINEZ: All right. It has already  
11 been 2 minutes, sir.

12 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Umanzor.

13 MR. UMANZOR: That was not enough time  
14 for bilingual people.

15 MR. SMALLEY: Ms. Lynnett Tello?

16 MS. LYNNETT TELLO: Hello. I am  
17 representing the Silverdale Civic Club. My name is  
18 Lynnett Tello. I am a official Metro representative  
19 for our neighborhood. My address is 4409 Baden. We  
20 support the Metro rail. Our neighborhood borders Moody  
21 Park and Fulton. We started meeting with Metro at the

22 beginning of this project, and they have kept us  
23 informed throughout this process. We have had open  
24 communication with Metro.

25 I have been a resident of this

1 neighborhood for 43 years. My husband has been a  
2 resident of this neighborhood also, along with his  
3 family, for 73 years. We have visited -- we have a  
4 vested interest in this neighborhood. We want the  
5 Metro rail now. We are tired of waiting. We are tired  
6 of meeting. Please start this project. Just do it.

7 Silverdale Civic Club representative -- I  
8 not only represent myself, but I represent my  
9 neighborhood. And we have lived here many, many years.  
10 We are excited about the Capitol Street stop that will  
11 help support our parks and help our children with the  
12 access to the parks. We are also excited about the new  
13 location of the area.

14 I was here during the riots in the '70s.  
15 I've seen the changes in the neighborhood. We are  
16 ready for a positive change. And yes, my family has  
17 personally been affected by buyout. Metro has already  
18 purchased some property along Fulton. Yes, were we  
19 excited about that? No, not necessarily. But to make  
20 a positive change, we all have to give a little.

21 Thank you very much. And thank you to

22 Mike Martinez for keeping the open communication with  
23 our neighborhood.

24 MR. SMALLEY: Thank you for your  
25 comments. At this time I'd like to ask, is there

1 anyone who signed up to speak whose name I have not yet  
2 called?

3 (No response.)

4 MR. SMALLEY: Okay. Let's move on, then.

5 If there is anyone who arrived late, perhaps, or who  
6 did not sign up to speak but who wishes to make  
7 2-minute comments now -- if so, I would invite you to  
8 the podium, and we can hear your comments as well. We  
9 would ask that you state your name and your address.

10 MR. RAMON GARCIA: Good afternoon. My  
11 name is Ramon Garcia. My business is in 5426 Fulton.  
12 I am opposed to this Metro thing because every business  
13 in the rail -- well, where is supposed to be the rail  
14 is going to affect everybody. We're going to be out of  
15 business. We can see them. And the street is, like,  
16 dead. Why? Because Metro destroy business.

17 Many people are, "Oh, yeah. We want  
18 Metro." But they don't live close where it's going to  
19 be the rail thing. So who's going to be affected?  
20 Business. And the prices of the properties is going to  
21 be skyrocketing. We going to move from this area

22 because we can't afford to pay the highest -- higher  
23 taxes. We can see right now. And before I pay \$800 to  
24 the taxes. Now it's 1,800, \$2,000. Couple years more,  
25 it's going to be \$5,000.

1           So where am I going to be? Out of  
2 business. Out of this area. This is our neighborhood.  
3 All the Hispanic, all this low -- all the low-income  
4 people, this what -- this is what's going to -- what's  
5 going to happen, really. Metro rail don't help too  
6 much to the neighborhood.

7           If you want something we can be proud of,  
8 make something -- make the -- some monorail on the air,  
9 something we can be proud, not that technology from the  
10 1900s. Railing is past. We need something we can be  
11 proud. Thank you.

12           MR. SMALLEY: Thank you, sir. Is there  
13 anyone else who has not yet spoken but wishes to?

14           (No response.)

15           MR. SMALLEY: Okay. Let me provide, once  
16 again, the address for written comments that need to be  
17 postmarked no later than June 9th. Those written  
18 comments should be mailed to Rhonda Boyer, Metropolitan  
19 Transit Authority of Harris County, Post Office Box  
20 61429, Houston, Texas 77208.

21           At this time I would, once again, like to

22 thank you all very much for spending part of your

23 Saturday to come here. And this hearing is now

24 officially closed. Thank you.

25

1 METRO  
2 NORTH CORRIDOR PUBLIC HEARING  
3 SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2008  
4

5 THE STATE OF TEXAS:  
6 COUNTY OF HARRIS:

7 I, Pam Gwin Coder, a Certified Shorthand Reporter  
8 in and for the State of Texas, do hereby certify that  
9 the statements in the caption hereto are true; that the  
10 above and foregoing transcript of the proceedings was  
11 taken by me in machine shorthand and same were reduced  
12 to typewriting under my direction; that the above and  
13 foregoing transcript as set forth in typewriting is a  
14 full, true, and correct transcript of the proceedings  
15 had at the time of taking said public hearing.

16 GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE, on this, the  
17 \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_\_\_.

18  
19

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