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SOUTHEAST CORRIDOR

SUPPLEMENTAL FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL

IMPACT STATEMENT

PUBLIC HEARING

22 WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2008
23 TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
24 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY BUILDING
25 6:30 P.M.

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

2

3 MS. KIM WILLIAMS

4 MS. TANYA MCWASHINGTON

5 MS. KAREN MARSHALL

6

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8 MR. JAVIER ROMAN - INTERPRETER

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1 MS. MARSHALL: Good afternoon. Could I
2 have your attention, please?

3 My name is Karen Marshall, and we are
4 about to begin the Supplemental Final Environmental --
5 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Hearing for
6 the Southeast Corridor.

7 At this time I'd like to recognize some of
8 the elected officials that are here. We have Meenal
9 Puranik with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee's office,
10 and we do expect the Congresswoman to come in very
11 shortly. We also have Ruben Landa representing Senator
12 Mario Gallegos. Chris Brown. Is Chris here with
13 Council Member Ronald Green's office? And Shaun Light
14 with Council Member Melissa Noriega's office.

15 And I think I saw Judge Zinetta Burney.
16 Yes, she is here. Judge Zinetta Burney.

17 Karen Haller. Karen Haller with Council
18 Member Wanda Adams' office.

19 Did I miss anyone? We had a sign-in sheet
20 out there. If I did, please let me know.

21 Okay. I don't think we have any other

22 METRO officers here. The presiding officer for today
23 will be Kimberly Williams who's an associate vice
24 president of corporate programs at METRO. Kimberly is
25 sitting up front.

1 The purpose of today's meeting, again, is
2 to receive comments on the Southeast Corridor
3 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement.
4 Public comments can also be submitted in writing and
5 they can be submitted to Ms. Rhonda Boyer -- and
6 Rhonda's actually sitting -- lined up against the wall
7 over here. But you can write the comments and submit
8 them via mail to Rhonda at the Metropolitan Transit
9 Authority, P.O. Box 61429, Houston, Texas, 77208-1429;
10 and those comments must be postmarked by June 11, 2008.

11 This hearing is being recorded. If there's
12 anyone here that needs a Spanish translation, there are
13 headsets available in the foyer.

14 At this time I'm going to turn the program
15 over to Kimberly Williams.

16 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Karen.

17 Again, welcome and thank you for coming out
18 tonight. Tonight is the public hearing for the
19 Southeast Corridor. We will have a brief presentation
20 giving you the highlights and the summary of the new
21 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement.

22 Followed by that will be the public comment period.

23 The first group of commenters will be

24 representatives -- excuse me, elected officials or their

25 representatives will come up first, then followed by

1 those who filled out speaker cards. If you have not
2 filled out a card, I, please, encourage you to do so.

3 Do we have some of the cards handy?

4 Okay. If you could step outside and fill
5 out a card, we can make sure that we have that.

6 We'll call the cards up in the order that
7 we receive them in a group of five. So, if you could
8 fill those out as soon as possible and return those back
9 so we can put your name on the list.

10 Followed by the group of speakers, we will
11 open -- open the floor to those who maybe come in late
12 or were unable to fill out a card. You will have an
13 opportunity to speak as well.

14 Your comments should be limited to the
15 Southeast Corridor, not to exceed two minutes.

16 Please note that your comments will be
17 recorded into the record. We do have a court reporter
18 here that will take that record for you and it will be
19 entered into the record.

20 We do have Spanish translation available.
21 So, please make sure if you need assistance to let us

22 know.

23 At this time, I'd like to introduce you to

24 Tanya McWashington who will give you a presentation of

25 the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

1 MS. MCWASHINGTON: Good evening.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Good evening.

3 MS. MCWASHINGTON: The purpose of today's
4 hearing -- and we're going to kind of keep saying some
5 things over and over again. But we want to provide a
6 status of the Southeast Corridor project and the changes
7 that have taken place since February, 2007. We're going
8 to present the Revised Locally Preferred Alternative.

9 And most importantly, we're going to provide an
10 opportunity for you to comment on this Revised Locally
11 Preferred Alternative.

12 I'd like to start with explaining what an
13 SFEIS is. The Supplemental Final Environmental Impact
14 Study evaluates and documents social, economic, and
15 environmental impacts and mitigation measures for the
16 Light Rail Locally Preferred Alternative that's now
17 being considered in the Southeast Corridor. It's being
18 circulated right now for a 30-day review and comment
19 period; and following the circulation and public review,
20 the responses will be compiled, addressed, and will be
21 offered during the review period and included in the

22 Record of Decision.

23 I'd like to take a moment -- it was great

24 for me to be here this evening and see so many familiar

25 faces. So many of you have been involved in this

1 process since the beginning. But for those of you who
2 have not, I'd like to take a moment and kind of walk you
3 through the time line and how we got here.

4 The alternative analysis began in 2001.
5 Took place and -- through 2004 and that evaluated a
6 range of different modes including light rail transit
7 and bus rapid transit as well as various alignment
8 alternatives to address transportation needs in the
9 Southeast Corridor. METRO's board of directors
10 recommended and approved a light rail transit alignment
11 in November, 2003. That alignment was, roughly, from
12 downtown Houston via Scott Street to Griggs to the
13 vicinity of IH-610.

14 In November, 2003, the Draft Environmental
15 Impact Statement began. That lasted through July, 2006.
16 This study analyzed the no-build alternative versus
17 light rail transit, bus rapid transit as well as bus
18 rapid transit convertible. There was a public hearing
19 held, which many of you attended, August 29th, 2006. In
20 August, 2006, METRO's board recommended bus rapid
21 transit convertible with a Wheeler/MLK alignment option.

22 The Final Environmental Impact Statement
23 began in August, 2006, and continued through January,
24 2007. This study prepared response to comments that
25 were made -- collected during the Draft Environmental

1 Impact Statement, and a Record of Decision was issued by
2 the Federal Transit Administration in February, 2007.

3 Following that, in October, 2007, METRO's
4 board revised the previously Locally Preferred
5 Alternative from bus rapid transit convertible to light
6 rail transit, although the alignment option did remain
7 the same. And since then, from October, 2007, to
8 present, the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact
9 Statement was prepared which documented impacts and
10 mitigation measures as well as provide an opportunity
11 for comments on the Revised Locally Preferred
12 Alternative.

13 Project changes since February, 2007. And
14 I'll go through these briefly. I do want to let you
15 know that the document is available. We do have it here
16 for review if anyone is interested. But the primary
17 changes were the proposal of light rail instead of bus
18 rapid transit convertible. The typical section was
19 reduced to minimize right-of-way impacts. The western
20 end of the alignment was extended to IH-45. The
21 alignment on Texas between 59 and Nagle as well as

22 storage and inspection facility will now be located on
23 Griggs Road. There was a station east of downtown
24 that's been relocated. And we've added five traction
25 powered substations as part of this program, although

1 the LPA alignment has not changed.

2 This is an example of a traction powered
3 substation, and this is -- provides electricity for
4 light rail transit operation. These substations are
5 actually located within an enclosed structure of
6 approximately 20 to 40 feet, and it will be located,
7 roughly, every mile along the alignment.

8 The effects and mitigation -- and this is
9 kind of bulleted out. I just want to spend a few
10 minutes just to highlight some of these. There are no
11 adverse effects to socio-economic conditions, land use,
12 air quality, neighborhoods, geology, soils, historic
13 properties, vibration, and transient conditions.

14 Relative to acquisitions and displacements,
15 46 residents and 39 businesses will have to be
16 relocated. Mitigation measures associated with those
17 relocations are guided by the property acquisition and
18 relocation -- I'm sorry. Mitigation will be guided by
19 the Uniform Relocation Assistance & Real Property
20 Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.

21 Relative to visual quality and aesthetics,

22 there will -- it has been identified that there will be
23 some visual intrusion. However, mitigation measures
24 recommended for implementation are landscaping and
25 screening.

1 There is one location along alignment where
2 it's been identified that there will be noise impacts.
3 Mitigation measures for that are to minimize the
4 exposure of the bell orientation.

5 Water resources. There have been some
6 evaluations that indicate that there could be some
7 surface waters affected by the new bridge across Brays
8 Bayou. Mitigation measures include a more detailed
9 hydrology study during the final design phase.

10 Small amounts of park property will be used
11 in the median at MLK and the park access road. A small
12 strip of land would be required from MLK Place Shopping
13 Center.

14 These are effects relative to parklands in
15 Section 4(f). Mitigation measures include the
16 installation of a traffic signal at the park entrance
17 road, a transit station at Old Spanish Trail for access
18 to the park, and replacement of any trees removed or
19 damaged.

20 Relative to ecosystems. The removal of any
21 trees along the MLK Boulevard median. Mitigation

22 measures are to minimize the clearing and cutting of
23 trees where possible.

24 There are 11 sites proposed for
25 right-of-way that under the Locally Preferred

1 Alternative may be affected by contamination.
2 Mitigation measures associated with this will need to be
3 determined based on the extent of the -- extent of
4 contamination and remediation.

5 I think I'm probably the third person now
6 that's going to say this but it's very important. We're
7 here to obtain your comments. We want to make sure that
8 you are aware of the opportunity that you have to do so.
9 You can make comments on-line. We have the -- the
10 E-mail address here.

11 During this public hearing, we've passed
12 out written comment forms when you checked in. Feel
13 free to fill those out. You can leave those with us
14 this evening or feel free to mail them to us. Again,
15 comments must be postmarked by Wednesday, June 11, 2008.

16 Kim has gone over the comment process for
17 the public hearing. I just want to reiterate. We will
18 call the first five people, have them sit here. You'll
19 come to this mike. We do have a court reporter on hand,
20 but we ask that everyone state their name for the record
21 prior to making your comments.

22 At this time I'm going to turn it back over
23 to Kim, our hearing officer, who will formally open the
24 public hearing.

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Tanya.

1 At this time I would also like to recognize
2 we have two additional elected officials joining us.
3 Nick Hellyar from Council Member James Rodriguez's
4 office and we also have Daniel Santamaria from Council
5 Member Peter Brown's office.

6 Our first five speakers are Kevin
7 Hoffman -- I'm sorry. Kevin Hoffman, Kelvin Williams,
8 Tina Araujo, Robert Harris, and Shawn Coleman. If you
9 could all join me at the chairs here on the side.

10 Mr. Hoffman, please.

11 Are there any elected officials or their
12 representatives who would like to come to the
13 microphone?

14 Mr. Hoffman.

15 MR. K. HOFFMAN: My name is Kevin Hoffman
16 and I'm a resident of Lindale Park in the near north
17 side of Houston and I apologize. I know this is not
18 the -- the alignment of the same section today. I'm
19 speaking on the north alignment.

20 The residents of the north side, we are
21 very anxious to see our -- our line put in place. We

22 have been working on this project, many of us, for
23 almost ten years; that we have committed going to METRO
24 meetings. We're very pleased with the progress at this
25 point. In fact, our biggest comment is we want to get

1 it built.

2 We initially thought that we were going to
3 be riding the rail in 2008, but that's been delayed due
4 to various problems in financing and -- and other
5 issues. We applaud METRO in their -- their work of HISD
6 and working to get safety issues addressed with the --
7 many of the young people within our community. We --
8 METRO, going through the north side, will be passing
9 five to six HISD schools as it goes to -- goes up to its
10 final destination in Northline Mall.

11 I do have one request that I would like to
12 see changed in the line. There is a -- when it gets to
13 Northline Mall, the -- there is a -- a METRO bus
14 interconnection station there that is on one side of the
15 street in Northline Mall parking lot. Then the METRO
16 station for the light rail is coming in in the middle of
17 the street and they -- to get off, our young people
18 would have to get off the train and then make that
19 transfer to the bus or vice versa and could create a
20 safety hazard. I wish that we could find some way to
21 mitigate that issue and -- and pull these two transit

22 centers together as we move forward.

23 But I want to thank METRO for all their

24 hard work and -- and let's get it built.

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Hoffman.

1 And I also ask when you come to the
2 microphone, please state your name and address.

3 MR. K. WILLIAMS: Good evening, everybody.
4 How are you doing tonight? My name is Kelvin Williams.
5 I'm a native Houstonian. And I've been going to METRO
6 meetings since the middle Seventies. And I would like
7 for you-all to go ahead and go build this thing and
8 let's get it over with.

9 I used to talk monorail when we came --
10 when Whitmire was the mayor, with Bob Lanier, Sylvester
11 Turner, got all happy about the monorail stuff. So,
12 please build this here rail and let's get excited about
13 it. Thank you very much.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: At this time we've been
15 joined by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. I'd like to
16 offer the microphone to her if she'd like to make a
17 comment.

18 CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE: (Shakes head.)

19 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Congresswoman.

20 The next speaker is Tina Araujo.

21 MS. T. ARAUJO: Hello. Good evening. My

22 name is Tina Araujo, spelled A-R-A-U-J-O; and I
23 represent the East Downtown Management District. Our
24 address is 815 Live Oak in east downtown.

25 I am very encouraged that METRO modified

1 the technology from bus rapid transit to light rail
2 transit. That's what we voted for. So, I'm very
3 pleased about that.

4 The alignment was modified within the east
5 downtown area but it is an alignment adjustment that we
6 are satisfied with and we are supportive of.

7 We are interested, though, in improving the
8 bus route connectivity to the light rail system. So,
9 we'll be working with METRO to find the best way to make
10 those two modes interconnected in a more satisfactory
11 way to serve the east downtown area. Although the
12 changes in technology did require additional study and
13 therefore delays, we are encouraged that the Record of
14 Decision will be reissued soon and that we can begin
15 constructing this LRT system.

16 I've been to many meetings and this message
17 is echoed over and over and over again. Many of us have
18 been here many years -- me 20 years -- waiting for LRT
19 to be constructed in Houston. And so, we passed the --
20 the METRO referendum five years ago and it's time to get
21 started. So, METRO, get going.

22 Thank you very much.

23 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

24 At this time I'd like to recognize we've

25 been joined by Council Member Wanda Adams, and I wanted

1 to offer her the opportunity to speak.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER W. ADAMS: Thank you, Kim.

3 First of all, I just want to -- just

4 welcome everybody for coming. And I'm -- I'm really

5 excited on two -- two phases. One, because being a

6 newly elected council member for District D is No. 1;

7 and two, because I want to make sure that I'm their

8 representative and have a voice especially for the part

9 of METRO that's going through District D and let you

10 know that I'm constantly meeting with METRO on --

11 one-on-one to make sure that we know every phase on

12 what's going to happen because the best of information

13 that I know, I will be able to make sure that I provide

14 it to each and every one of you.

15 So, anything that I can do on behalf of our

16 District D office, I welcome you to call us, to call

17 upon us on any issues or any concerns that you may have

18 or some unanswered questions because I'm here for you.

19 And two members of my staff is here which is Shavonda

20 Johnson and Karen Haller. And I just look forward to

21 continuing to working with you and continue to working

22 with METRO in making sure that it's -- it works for
23 everyone that's involved in this process.

24 Thank you.

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Our next speaker is Robert

1 Harris. No Robert Harris.

2 All right. Shawn Coleman.

3 MR. S. COLEMAN: Hello. My name is Shawn
4 Coleman. I live at 4376 Fiesta Lane in the University
5 Oaks Subdivision.

6 We've been involved with METRO and -- with
7 this rail line down Wheeler since it came to our
8 attention in 2006 when they made the change from going
9 down Scott all the way to Griggs. And throughout this
10 entire time, we've always had a problem with the route
11 of the train running on the south side of Wheeler
12 because it -- what it does, it crosses the road four
13 times in less than a thousand feet. And we think that
14 because of this -- right up against our neighborhood --
15 but it's going to cause us problems getting in and out
16 of our neighborhood because the only two ways getting
17 out of our neighborhood to Wheeler will be crossed by
18 the train or the bus, whatever it is, every six minutes
19 which is going to cause us a problem having to go over
20 the 60 feet.

21 So, what we'd like METRO to do is take a

22 look at taking the rail line and moving it to the
23 location of where Wheeler sits now and taking Wheeler
24 and relocating Wheeler south of the rail to where you
25 have the new rail line running at this time. That's

1 what our subdivision intends and that's what we'd like
2 to see is the rail line to take a continuous straight
3 line down Wheeler instead of crossing it and then taking
4 Wheeler and jogging it down and running to the south of
5 the rail line so that we have open access into Wheeler
6 from our subdivision.

7 Thank you.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

9 Our next group of speakers -- if you can
10 join me at the seats here on the side -- Jeff Kabin,
11 Barry Klein, Reverend Fana, Dr. Teddy McDavid, and Diane
12 Sheffield. If you'll please join me at the seats on the
13 side.

14 Mr. Kabin.

15 MR. J. KABIN: Hi. My name is Jeff Kabin,
16 spelled K-A-B-I-N; and I live at 4377 Fiesta, the
17 University Oaks Subdivision.

18 My comments are along the lines of those of
19 Shawn Coleman who just spoke. Basically, if you look at
20 the way that this is going, the rail is crossing your --
21 outside of our division and it's running on -- as

22 proposed, the south side of Wheeler which creates a
23 number of safety hazards. Every time somebody has to
24 cross either the light rail track or the road, there's a
25 risk of an accident or the risk of a pedestrian getting

1 hit by a car or a train.

2 So, we want -- what I'd like to see, just
3 minimize that risk. If the majority of the riders based
4 on population density are going to be from the
5 university, why have all these college students crossing
6 Wheeler every time to get to the light rail. And
7 likewise, when we leave our development, I don't want to
8 have to drive out in the neighborhood with my wife and
9 kids in the car and run the risk of getting hit by the
10 light rail or having to cross that light rail to get to
11 Wheeler. It just -- to me, it doesn't make sense.

12 The -- the problems that we've heard are,
13 No. 1, well, what do you do during the construction
14 phase because you would have to close Wheeler down in
15 that section by our neighborhood. And that's really not
16 true. You can build the section of Wheeler that would
17 run on the south side of Wheeler and then tear up
18 Wheeler after the fact and lay the tracks for the -- the
19 light rail there.

20 The second concern is how close you put the
21 light rail to the high tension lines that run on

22 University Oaks -- or I'm sorry, that run down Wheeler.
23 Well, there's shielding that can be put in place to
24 leave those existing wires. We're also trying to get
25 from METRO information on just how close can that

1 distance be between the light rail power lines and that
2 of the existing high tension lines.

3 The -- the last comment that I had -- it's
4 a brief one -- is just the -- the idea of the East
5 University station area being down by -- by University
6 Oaks and Wheeler does not seem like really the best
7 place to put that station. In fact, in the table that
8 you give on Page S14 of the -- of the study, this --
9 this station has the lowest ridership of all the stops
10 that are listed on --

11 MS. MARSHALL: Mr. Kabin, your time has
12 expired.

13 MR. J. KABIN: Okay. I'd suggest moving it
14 to Cullen.

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Kabin.

16 Mr. Klein.

17 MR. B. KLEIN: I'm Barry Klein and I live
18 in the North Corridor and I'm -- I want to state for the
19 record that there is -- my address, 1509 Everett Street.

20 I should state for the record there's a lot
21 of paths of opposition to the rail proposal for the

22 north side. Property owners and business owners and --
23 and transit users all have very serious misgivings about
24 METRO's plan to put rail on North Main and Fulton.
25 I want to talk about the condemnation zone.

1 Around every station -- as the handout I gave you
2 shows -- is 162 acres that will be affected, that METRO
3 can take that property and then sell it to developers.
4 Now, it's not likely that METRO's going to be taking a
5 lot of property, at least immediately, to redevelop it.
6 But it means that anybody who's in that circle will be
7 affected by METRO's power. And I suspect that means
8 that over time, property owners will come to understand
9 that and they'll start to withhold maintenance on their
10 property because they don't want to -- they don't
11 control the property like they did before the station
12 arrived. And that, to my mind, means that the
13 Environmental Impact Statement should reflect that
14 likely market impact.

15 If you have 162 acres around every station
16 that's affected by the condemnation power, that means a
17 large part of all these neighborhoods will be sending --
18 forced to go through a deterioration as individual
19 property owners start to withhold maintenance and also I
20 think that means that potential buyers will have to
21 offer less when they buy a property 'cause they know

22 that they don't control it because METRO has the final

23 say-so.

24 So, my -- my question deals with

25 specifically that issue and does the impact statement --

1 or will it before it's finally finalized -- look at that
2 impact -- the market impact of being inside a
3 condemnation zone and put some -- I guess I don't know
4 how you would deal with that or even mitigate that --
5 you trying to compensate property owners for that likely
6 reduction of value --

7 MS. MARSHALL: Mr. Klein, your time has
8 expired.

9 MR. B. KLEIN: -- and the impact on nearby
10 properties.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Our next speaker is Reverend
13 Fana.

14 REVEREND FANA: Let me know when we get
15 started.

16 MS. MARSHALL: Started.

17 REVEREND FANA: Okay. My name is Reverend
18 Fana. I live at 5500 Martin Luther King Boulevard here
19 in Houston, Texas.

20 And the idea of a ground rail running by an
21 elementary school is outrageous, scandalous, and

22 immoral. The idea of a ground rail running by a
23 elementary school is outrageous, immoral, and
24 scandalous. Ground rail is inherently a risky
25 proposition because it's running on the ground. In

1 other cities, rail is always put under the ground as a
2 subway or it's put above the ground as an elevated line.
3 That's how you run a rail system.

4 Why would you have a system running on the
5 ground when you inherently know that you going to have
6 problems with cars, traffic, and people? But on top of
7 that, to propose having a ground rail line on Martin
8 Luther King Boulevard between Old Spanish Trail and
9 Griggs, where you have an elementary school, where you
10 have a youth center, and where you have a present
11 building academy which is going to have K through 8,
12 which is KIPP Academy, and then it's going to be -- as
13 far as K through 12 -- is also ridiculous.

14 Why would you put children's lives at risk
15 with a light rail system which is running nonstop
16 between Old Spanish Trail and Griggs? They are no
17 proposed stops on this whole block. So, you going to
18 run the rail with no stops, pass an elementary school,
19 pass a youth academy, and then pass -- K through 12,
20 when you have an alternative to run it on a piece of
21 ground that's been sitting foul for 30 years that the

22 City took over. To me, this is absolutely ridiculous.

23 If the light rail proposal in its present

24 proposed state was brought to the voters, it would never

25 have passed. You could never have convinced people to

1 vote for a ground rail running by an elementary school,
2 running by a youth center, and running by a
3 kindergarten.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Reverend Fana, your time has
5 expired.

6 REVEREND FANA: I don't believe it. I
7 don't believe we could have done it and I think it's
8 scandalous that you even propose it.

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Our next speaker is
10 Dr. Teddy -- Teddy McDavid.

11 DR. T. MCDAVID: Thank you.

12 I am Dr. Teddy McDavid at 3746 Charleston.

13 I want to preface my remarks by saying I
14 want to speak in favor of the concept and the importance
15 of transportation and mobility as it relates to the
16 revitalization of a community. And so, at the outset,
17 let me say to you that the present group having been
18 selected by METRO was not my choice, not my choice. We
19 lobbied in favor of the rail going down Scott and, of
20 course, turning at Griggs and/or OST which would have
21 solved, we think, a number of issues.

22 I represent 57 civic clubs, businesses up
23 and down OST, Griggs, Scott, Alameda. You name it. All
24 over. Some 67 businesses and, of course, the community
25 residents in what we like to call the greater southeast

1 area -- Old Spanish Trail area. I'm sorry. Wrong
2 board.

3 The -- the entire concept of transportation
4 and mobility in my judgment represents a tool to
5 revitalize our community. Only a tool. We know for a
6 fact that with light rail comes economic development.

7 When we moved here in the early Sixties,
8 you will remember -- those of you who are in that
9 category -- the bustling Palm Center where we could
10 shop, where we would go to grocery stores, et cetera, et
11 cetera. And then, of course, we were hit with the
12 blight of the Eighties and everybody moved to the
13 suburbs.

14 Here is our opportunity via METRO and the
15 light rail, even though this is not my choice, to
16 revitalize the community. And so, we say on behalf of
17 those residents, thank you to METRO. Not only are we
18 saying thank you to METRO for this project, but we are
19 going to venture out hopefully with the southeast
20 transit center with a very new beginning of having a
21 signature bus running from Mykawa to the Medical Center.

22 So, there again, the transportation issues, the
23 job-related issues, the economic stimulation, that's why
24 we say thank you for giving us --
25 MS. MARSHALL: Dr. McDavid, your time has

1 expired.

2 DR. T. MCDAVID: -- one more opportunity to
3 revitalize the community.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Before we bring up our next
6 speaker, I'd like to ask our next five to join us. Mary
7 Thomas, Neil Myer, Preston Roe, Louis Ray, and Arnell
8 Johnson.

9 At this time Diane Sheffield is our next
10 speaker.

11 MS. L. OLIVER: Go Cuney.

12 MS. D. SHEFFIELD: Good evening, everyone.
13 I'm Diane Sheffield representing Cuney Homes which
14 everyone knows is public housing under the umbrella of
15 the Housing Authority of the City of Houston. And I
16 represent now over a thousand residents that live there
17 in Cuney Homes and I'm here on behalf of those residents
18 that work, go to school, go to college, go to high
19 school, middle school, and they need this
20 transportation.

21 And she almost took the words right out of

22 my mouth. But I'm going to say them like in my own
23 words. In the Eighties -- Seventies and Eighties, the
24 transportation that we got those -- when we got those
25 METRO buses, we got those buses and we needed those

1 buses. They got there. They needed them there, and it
2 was wonderful. And I feel now with the -- the -- the --
3 the -- oh, Lord, I've gotten nervous now -- the --
4 the -- the --

5 UNKNOWN PERSON: Light rail.

6 MS. D. SHEFFIELD: -- the light rail that
7 are coming now are going to be -- of the future, they're
8 going to be good for the future. They going to be good
9 because it's going to be something that is going to be
10 for us like when the buses came for us. So, I say,
11 METRO, thank you. Thank you all of you that are here
12 representing METRO because it's going to be something
13 that is going to be good for us like when we got our
14 METRO buses. It's everything that we needed.
15 Everything we needed to have and everything we need for
16 our future.

17 So, thank you so much.

18 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

19 Our next speaker is Mary Thomas.

20 Ms. Thomas.

21 MS. M. THOMAS: She's going to take my

22 place.

23 MS. L. OLIVER: Good evening, everybody.

24 My name is Lafoge Oliver and I live at 3700 Burkett

25 Street, Apartment No. 55F. And to recognize, that was

1 my president Diane Sheffield. And I'm honored today to
2 speak in the place of Ms. Thomas.

3 Ms. Thomas, just to give you a little
4 background, she's one of the -- I call her the ancient
5 one, one of the Golden Girls -- that spoke up for the 68
6 bus line. Just to give you a little short background,
7 she's the one that used to have to catch the 68 bus that
8 goes all the way out Braeswood -- to be a very, very
9 historic servant.

10 We thank METRO for servicing us and I know
11 it's a very hard economic time as far as the gas and I
12 just found out that the METRO bus runs on a different
13 oil than what we're dealing with today. But one thing
14 that we do need from METRO is not to forget about us
15 that are still struggling, that still oppressed, that
16 still need to be trained how to vote for these different
17 things that we require and that we need in life for the
18 future.

19 We thank you. The most important thing
20 that she asked for me to say is that we welcome the
21 rail. We hope it grows into a better -- better mode of

22 transportation and hope that the poor people and the
23 ones that have to get out here and hustle to keep this
24 city going will be able to afford it and keep us safe.

25 Thank you.

1 MS. WILLIAMS: At this time Neil Myer is
2 our next speaker.

3 MR. N. MYER: Hi. My name is Neil Myer and
4 I live at 2822 Pinehurst. The question that I have is
5 is that I keep a spreadsheet on agency ridership that
6 goes back to the mid-Nineties. In the aftermath of the
7 light rail line being built on Main Street, the
8 ridership reached about 40,000 a day. As far as I can
9 tell, there were about 30,000 in the corridor. However,
10 of the 16 largest bus routes that intersected the rail
11 line, they lost more riders and patrons than the light
12 rail ones gained.

13 For example, the No. 2 Bellaire route used
14 to have nearly 15,000 patrons a day and now it has
15 11,000. The Hiram Clarke route used to have 7500 riders
16 a day; now it has 3500. Both routes truncate the rail
17 line.

18 My question is: How many bus routes are
19 going to be truncated, re-routed, or cut in order for
20 this program to be put through and how many patrons are
21 going to be lost? Otherwise, we're going to be spending

22 a whole lot of money to build light rail lines and all

23 we're going to be doing is replacing bus routes.

24 That's all I have to say. Thanks.

25 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

1 At this time Preston Roe is our next
2 speaker.

3 MR. P. ROE: Good afternoon.

4 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Good afternoon.

5 MR. P. ROE: I am Preston Roe. That's
6 spelled R-O-E, not R-O-W-E. I stay at 3731 Florinda
7 Street in Houston, Texas. I am the president of the
8 La Salette Place Civic Club. I'm also the president of
9 the Greater Southeast -- Greater West Key South Union,
10 Super Neighborhood No. 68.

11 I am here to speak for the light rail. I
12 have worked with the light rail meeting since its
13 inception in 2001. We have been having meetings. For
14 those of you that did not know about this, this was
15 announced. So, if you didn't make it, then that is not
16 METRO's fault. It is that you didn't -- was not
17 informed.

18 I support the light rail. And I eventually
19 hope to see it not only stop at Palm Center, but go all
20 the way out to Hobby Airport. If you've ever been to
21 Atlanta, Georgia, you'll know the conditions that the

22 people have in Atlanta, Georgia, with light rail

23 there -- with the rail system. So, again, I do support

24 light rail.

25 Thank you very much.

1 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

2 Our next speaker is Louis Ray.

3 MS. L. RAY: I'm Louis Ray, a resident of

4 Wheeler Street.

5 I support light rail, also. But I would
6 like for METRO to ditch their present plan for light
7 rail because it's not what we voted for in the 2003
8 ballot. Light rail -- what we voted for was down Elgin
9 Street. And I don't understand how the Mayor and some
10 of his representatives can change the route of the rail
11 that we voted for in 2003 to another location without
12 approval of the citizens of the city of Houston who
13 voted for them and put them in office.

14 So, I resent that current rail plan. And I
15 would like for them to stop that current rail plan and
16 go back to the citizens and get their approval because
17 we put them in the office and we elected them and they
18 said Elgin Street. It did not say anything about
19 Wheeler Street, MLK, or Richmond. So, how can the Mayor
20 and the City of Houston change something and not get
21 input from the citizens from the city of Houston who put

22 them in office? And everybody allowed them to do it and

23 I resent it.

24 And another thing, I also resent some of

25 our state and local representatives who went behind our

1 back, approved rail down Wheeler Street without our
2 knowledge and without our input. And I resent that
3 because we voted for them and put them in office, also.
4 So, I don't like what's been going on anyway. It's not
5 666 time already.

6 Thirdly, Wheeler Street is too narrow. We
7 have residential homes. We have oak trees. Our homes
8 are on piers and beams. It will affect our mobility.
9 It will affect our health, our quality of life, our
10 safety, and everything. So -- and our homes. They --

11 MS. MARSHALL: Ms. Ray, your time --

12 MS. L. RAY: -- on piers and beams.

13 MS. MARSHALL: -- has expired.

14 MS. L. RAY: So, I don't want that down
15 Wheeler Street.

16 One minute, please.

17 We gave them an alternative in some
18 meetings that they could come down Wheeler Street and go
19 down Alameda and go to Elgin or Alabama. Now, I would
20 like --

21 MS. MARSHALL: Your time has expired.

22 MS. L. RAY: Yes. Just a moment.

23 So, since they have refused to meet with us

24 and discuss other plans, it gives me the impression that

25 this is about gentrification, it's about land grabbing,

1 it's about zoning, and it's about taking over the place,
2 putting in high-rises and towers for the rich and famous
3 and I don't appreciate it.

4 And thank you for allowing me to make that
5 last comment.

6 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

7 Before we call up our next speaker, would
8 Sarah Lancelin please join us at the seats on the side.

9 Our next speaker is Arnell Johnson.

10 MS. A. JOHNSON: Thank you and good
11 evening. My name is Arnell Johnson. I reside at 2202
12 Truxillo Avenue in Washington Terrace.

13 I feel like just saying that Ms. Ray can
14 have my two minutes. She spoke so eloquently.

15 Thank you, Ms. Ray.

16 MS. L. RAY: Thank you.

17 MS. A. JOHNSON: But I -- while you were
18 speaking, I was thinking about Humphrey Bogart and that
19 famous line in Casablanca, "Play it again, Sam."

20 I'm not here to play it again but to say it
21 again. I, too, am in favor of effective and efficient

22 mass transit. I, too, am in favor of economic

23 development.

24 But these are the things of which I am not

25 in favor. First of all, I am not in favor for this

1 corridor -- the Southeastern Corridor to take the rail
2 line -- as the minister said so eloquently -- down MLK
3 in front of elementary schools, charter schools, places
4 where our children are trying to learn.

5 Secondly, I am not in favor of continuing
6 with the routing plan to take the rail down Wheeler
7 Avenue where our senior citizens are. Not only will it
8 make it difficult for them to maneuver and to function
9 every day in terms of mobility, but it's also an
10 intrusion into our -- our community. It's -- it's
11 breaking up our community. And we are already suffering
12 so many attacks from the school district closing our
13 schools, from METRO bringing routes down through our --
14 our community. And so, I implore you, please --

15 MS. MARSHALL: Ms. Johnson, your time has
16 expired.

17 MS. A. JOHNSON: -- listen to us.

18 Thank you. I appreciate this opportunity.

19 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is Sarah Lancelin.

21 MS. S. LANCELIN: A very pleasant good

22 afternoon, and I am just glad to be here tonight.

23 At the very outset, I support the rail

24 system. I support the rail system because when it first

25 came into being or when it was first started, Dr. Teddy

1 McDavid gave something on the rail system every fourth
2 Monday night in the month. It appears that she didn't
3 leave anything untold. I had my time then to say no,
4 yes, I believe so, or whatever.

5 So, one of the first things I'm going to
6 do, I'm going to thank her dearly and those people who
7 spent their time to come out to us to clarify and for
8 her to push more questions down their throats for them
9 to come back and be able to give us. We're very
10 satisfied with it. And I'm speaking on behalf of the
11 McGregor Trail Civic Club. And I live at 5403 Tallow
12 Lane.

13 But what really occurred to me with this
14 huge makeup and planning is -- as you can see it if you
15 just look at me real well -- is I'm a little -- a little
16 older, not very much, but a little, and that is we are
17 near a electrical plant and sometimes -- and especially
18 during bad weather -- that plant just goes bad. I don't
19 know the correct name for it. But what I am equally as
20 concerned about is there's many people who live in my
21 area now because it's a -- it's a senior citizen area --

22 have use for oxygen --

23 MS. MARSHALL: Ms. Lancelin, your time has

24 expired. Finish your statement. Your time has expired.

25 MS. S. LANCELIN: Okay. Thank you,

1 darling.

2 And another thing I would like you to
3 consider if it hasn't been considered and that is the
4 flooding.

5 Other than that, thanks again, Dr. Teddy
6 McDavid, for all that you said -- ever since the
7 inception of the system.

8 Good evening, everybody.

9 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

10 Do we have any other speakers who did not
11 fill out a card who would like to speak at this time?

12 CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE: I don't want to
13 discourage anyone from coming. So, I hope by my filling
14 in someone will be encouraged to come forward.

15 But my purpose here tonight is to listen,
16 and I want to introduce my staff. Nal, if you would
17 stand up. She will be here after the meeting for anyone
18 who has a particular interest. We're going to work with
19 the people on Fiesta Lane, and we're certainly going to
20 work with Ms. Ray on Wheeler. I know there are
21 overlapping lines here. One is a university line. This

22 is the southeast line.

23 But we welcome all of your insight and I

24 don't think anyone is against the impact of what may

25 come about through a light rail system. Dr. Teddy

1 McDavid indicated that is what we have been preaching,
2 the economic opportunity, the economic engine, but we're
3 also very respectful of the quality of life of all of
4 those who live in our community and I believe we should
5 respect that as well.

6 So, I am here to listen. And I want to
7 make sure that those of you who are in the respective
8 areas that there are interests that we work on in
9 Washington and one of those areas is the environmental
10 impact. It's an EIS statement that has to be presented
11 by METRO.

12 The other question is security. And I
13 chair the transportation security committee that has
14 given METRO quite a bit of money to address the question
15 of security from a different perspective but all of that
16 plays into a system that will work for all of you.

17 So, it was very helpful to listen to you.
18 I am, likewise, grateful for Council Member Adams; and
19 we are still scheduled to meet so that we can have a
20 collaborative work product together.

21 And let me also thank the stakeholders who

22 are here. That is a system that has been put in place.

23 Can I have the stakeholders stand? I don't

24 know if you were introduced before I came in. All the

25 stakeholders. I see Minister Muhammad. You can move

1 your seat out. You got your hand out. So, you can
2 stand. We can't see you. Stakeholders and others.
3 Stand up, Mr. Muhammad. And whatever other roles these
4 other ladies are in the back -- I may have the wrong
5 names -- but Ms. Brown, I see. Stand up. I'm not sure
6 what the titles are.

7 But we do appreciate this concept of
8 stakeholders and I hope you will take advantage of
9 individuals who are in the community in these various
10 units.

11 Let me close by saying that there are two
12 points that are never discussed when we have these town
13 hall meetings by METRO but I would like you to think
14 about this system being an economic opportunity for
15 small businesses. And I hope that if any of you are
16 small businesses that you'll be sure to make yourself
17 known to METRO for the opportunity that that generates.

18 And then lastly, any of you who have family
19 members, young people, this is also a job center, if you
20 will, because people have to work on building the lines
21 and I do hope that you will make yourself available for

22 the huge construction effort that this will be,
23 combining it with the better quality of life for all of
24 us to make this system and this community a better
25 community and a better mobile community.

1 So, thank you-all very much and I've
2 listened a lot and I hope that you'll take advantage of
3 Meenal, and we'll be back in touch with you.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Congresswoman
6 Lee.

7 Do we have any other elected officials who
8 either came in or were not recognized or who at this
9 time would like to make a comment?

10 Okay. Do -- again, do we have anyone who
11 would like to make a comment who did not submit a
12 comment card?

13 When you come to the microphone, please
14 give your name and address.

15 MR. P. MAGAZINER: My name is Paul
16 Magaziner, and I'm on Richmond Avenue. And like
17 Ms. Ray, I got involved in this because we didn't vote
18 on Richmond Avenue next to Greenway Plaza.

19 In the last two and a half years I've spent
20 a thousand hours of my time studying METRO, studying
21 their financials, what they're doing to the transit

22 riders. I've also looked at all the historical numbers
23 on Main Street. Cars and traffic in the Medical Center,
24 it's a complete disaster. Main Street has become a
25 sacrificial lamb. And this is about real estate and

1 redevelopment. It has nothing to do with smart mass
2 transit.

3 Like a lot of you, I favor commuter rail
4 but you cannot put rail in the streets at grade level
5 and be safe. Martin Luther King is a beautiful street.
6 The esplanades are going to be gone. The guideway is
7 26 feet. On some of those residential streets, you're
8 going to come out and you're only going to be able to go
9 to the right or to the left.

10 On Richmond Avenue, they're closing 30
11 medians. The 98 percent of us who are never going to be
12 on transit, except once every ten years to the
13 Superbowl, it's going to completely kill vehicles'
14 mobility.

15 On Griggs Road, the new light rail
16 maintenance facility is going to operate 24 hours a day.
17 The apartments across the street are going to have a
18 nightmare getting in. That median is probably going to
19 be closed. They're going to add signalized lights. The
20 Reverend is right on schools and churches.

21 METRO is showing -- they showed 75 up here

22 property takings. If you look in the document on the
23 southeast side, there's 150 property takings. This is
24 anything but a transparent situation. It's about money,
25 power, and greed. It has nothing to do with smart

1 transit.

2 The people that have to ride METRO, it's
3 important to them. They usually get there with an
4 81 percent on-time performance. Since Main Street was
5 put in and they made -- forced everybody to transfer,
6 on-time performance is 51 percent. Each transit rider,
7 people that can't afford vehicles -- some can and
8 they're professionals living on Main Street and they're
9 going to downtown -- but the people that are transit
10 dependent are losing one hour a day, coming -- one hour
11 of their valuable time.

12 And so, putting in 30 more miles of this is
13 nonsense. It's not done anywhere in the United States
14 of America. This is about real estate, redevelopment,
15 and taking advantage of a 1977 law and our Congress
16 people --

17 MS. MARSHALL: Your time has expired.

18 MR. P. MAGAZINER: -- should be ashamed of
19 themselves.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

21 Do we have any other comments at this time?

22 And please remember to say your name and
23 address.

24 MS. D. BROWN: Good evening. My name is
25 Daryl Brown. I live at 3727 Eagle Street right off of

1 Scott, Southeast Corridor.

2 I'm just here to really reiterate what the
3 gentleman just said about Main Street being the
4 sacrificial lamb. We always say that the rail is going
5 to bring us economic development. Yet -- and still we
6 had small businesses on Main Street. Those businesses
7 have all closed. So, what is the rail going to do for
8 us?

9 The gentleman once stated -- I don't know
10 his name, from the north side -- about the condemn --
11 condemnation zone. We got to be very, very careful.
12 We're living in an area, we're living in a neighborhood,
13 but are we really sure that METRO is doing the best
14 thing for us?

15 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. Any more comments at
16 this time?

17 MS. D. SIMON: Good evening. My name is
18 Dee Simon. I reside at 5210 Cortelyou Lane, Houston,
19 Texas, 77021, right off MLK.

20 I want to reiterate what Reverend Fana
21 said, what a couple of other speakers have said. It is

22 an atrocity for METRO to even think let alone let its
23 engineers and planners run ground level transportation
24 such as light rail past elementary age children who will
25 be listening to their iPods and playing their little

1 games and/or watching their parents after they drop them
2 off or coming to pick them up possibly get hit, maimed
3 or killed by a train that is meant to be smart mass
4 commuter transit.

5 There's nothing -- we have no traffic
6 congestion on that section of MLK. We have low
7 ridership, as a matter of fact, according to METRO's own
8 numbers on that section of MLK. And I have been reading
9 and marking METRO's SFEIS and these are just some of the
10 questions and things that I have to get back with them
11 about. I find it full of -- well, I can't think of the
12 right word right now -- but untruths is the only way
13 that I can put it. Okay?

14 And the children, the seniors, we stayed.
15 We paid the taxes to develop our areas along MacGregor
16 Trails -- I heard you. MacGregor Place, Wheeler. We
17 bought smart. We pay the price to stay. We should be
18 able and allowed to grow old in our homes without being
19 run away by light rail. Anything that METRO or the City
20 is planning for those of us who would like to grow old
21 and enjoy our homes, businesses, and see our

22 grandchildren --

23 MS. MARSHALL: Ms. Simon, your time as

24 expired.

25 MS. D. SIMON: Thank you. All right.

1 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

2 Any final comments?

3 For those of you who did not make a verbal
4 comment this evening, you are still able to send in
5 written comments and there are written comment forms. I
6 think there's some here at the table up front. There
7 are also some outside at the table as soon as you walk
8 out of the door. Those written comments can be
9 submitted to Ms. Rhonda Boyer, Metropolitan Transit
10 Authority of Harris County, P.O. Box 61429, Texas, 77201
11 (sic). Comments must be postmarked by June 11th, 2008.

12 For those of you who have not seen the
13 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement, it is
14 available on our Web site and at public libraries and
15 other locations. There is a copy available this evening
16 if you'd like to review it before you leave tonight.

17 I want to thank you-all for coming and I
18 appreciate your time and your input. And, again,
19 written comments must be submitted by June 11th, 2008.

20 Thank you. And drive safely.

21 (Ending time at 7:34 p.m.)

22

23

24

25

1 THE STATE OF TEXAS)

2 COUNTY OF HARRIS)

3

4 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

5 PUBLIC HEARING

6 MAY 28, 2008

7

8 I, the undersigned Certified Shorthand Reporter in

9 and for the State of Texas, certify that the facts

10 stated in the foregoing pages are true and correct.

11 I further certify that I am neither attorney or

12 counsel for, related to, nor employed by any parties to

13 the action in which this testimony is taken and,

14 further, that I am not a relative or employee of any

15 counsel employed by the parties hereto or financially

16 interested in the action.

17 SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO under my hand and seal of

18 office on this the 30th day of May, 2008.

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