

**METRO University Corridor  
Public Meetings  
March 26 and 27, 2007**

Planning workshops were conducted where a facilitator asked each group a series of questions about the University Corridor alternative alignments. The following are the responses from each of the workshops.

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**Greenway Plaza Renaissance  
March 26, 2007  
West Alignment Concentration**

**Workshop for the Hillcroft Station to UPRR Segment**

**1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?**

- Number of regulatory sites – surprising
- Level of service information analysis for intersection confirms belief
- 610 – Westpark intersection a concern
- may be some grade separation
- bigger picture solution, intersection needs help regardless of BRT and LRT
- 59 feeder at Westpark and Chimney Rock intersections – traffic lights – concern
- connection between Uptown and University alignment
- good bike/pedestrian opportunities, poor infrastructure
  - running alongside alignment
  - perpendicular connections
- People already work – bike in Gulfton area therefore bike facilities
- Put a station at Fountainview and one at Chimney Rock
- Stations should be available at high density residential/multi-family land use
- Potential at South Rice and New Castle have unutilized land and therefore park and ride potential
- Parking access can add value

**2. With respect to the proposed alignment – What is most attractive? What benefits could be realized?**

- Serves high population and density area
- Serves employment on Westpark
- Allows for future development on Westpark/land development
- Additional park and ride opportunities

**3. What challenges or concerns do you foresee given the proposed alignment? What can METRO do to address some of these challenges and concerns?**

- Signal preemption not necessary – rail should go along with traffic flow
- Maximization/coordination between the transit and regular traffic instead of one usurping the other
- Train needs to increase mobility and not be an end in itself
- Safety – a concern at intersections
- Some intersections may need grade separation
- Grade separation at Kirby and Westpark, Buffalo Speedway and Westpark and Wesleyan at Westpark would help make rail safe and speed up the train
- Need to re-examine the bus service in the area, specifically the north south routes
- Between 610 and UPRR, Westpark very ugly. Rail could bring beautification and landscaping
- Relocate dog park
- Keep the alignment on Westpark
- Improve pedestrian access from HCC west loop campus to Westpark

**Summary**

- Need more stations
- Stay on Westpark for safety and traffic concerns
- Deal with intersections and traffic
- Alignment well serves population densities outside Loop 610
- Examine and improve bus, pedestrian, and bike connections

## Workshop for the Kirby to Wheeler Station Segment (Group 1)

**1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?**

### Surprising

- Proposing rail on north side of freeway because of sound wall
- Elevated rail in your backyard
- That it would go over bridges

### Excited/Concerned about

- Getting cars off the road
- Safety
- Flooding
- Do to historic homes
- Unique small businesses on Richmond
- Doesn't address commuter concerns – not main
- Lanes of Southwest Freeway
- Devalue homes
- Hurt businesses
- Excited for future use by children
- Excited massage parlors going out of business
- Concerned with METRO working with and compensating businesses
- Excited alternatives are where the people are – serves a large population (but this not along SW Freeway)
- METRO stated policy use of eminent domain to promote high density development
- Noise concerns
- Concern for emergency vehicle access
- Surprised does not go to Galleria

**2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?**

### Most Attractive

- Neither attractive (6)
- Richmond alternative (11)
- 59 as alternative (0)
- If have to choose:
  - 59
  - 1 vote Richmond
- METRO has its own police – added security
- Do not believe there currently is a METRO police presence

**3. What challenges or concerns do you foresee given the proposed alignment? What can METRO do to address some of these challenges and concerns?**

### Challenges for the 59 Alignment

- Airborne matter
- For sound – some sort of enclosure?
- For contiguous neighbors to rail

- If vibrations and sight are issues and devalues my property
- Construction impact concern
  - No feeder roads, access would be from people's yards of 59 freeway
- Concerns elevation over houses
- Communities\* already suffer from noise and pollution – been hit once, being hit again (\*on north and south side)
- 5 or 6 years of construction already
- concerns that 59 alignment impacts properties with 15 feet of easement
- no stops between Montrose and Shepherd – does not serve, bypasses neighborhood
- no access to park
- concern with expense
- inner city growth – need something imaginative and effective or will be strangled by growth
- doesn't go where the people are
- goes through most affluent area – does not serve them
- that it's not at grade – benefit
- pedestrian traffic – children don't have to cross
- access to station

#### Concerns and benefits for the Richmond alignment

- Short term business impact (8)
- Long term (5)
- Both (12)
- Congestion/loss of mobility
- Benefit – access to/from neighborhoods and businesses and to rest of city
- Cost benefit ratio
- Less cars less pollution

#### Address concerns for the 59 Alignment

- don't see how concerns could be satisfied
  - can't address aesthetic, expense, noise

#### Address concerns for the Richmond Alignment

- Businesses on Richmond – METRO has outreach plan to work with them and METRO learn from Main St.
- construction – scheduling
  - time of day
  - how it affects businesses
- Offer financial package to businesses
- Parking ordinance to address impact of space due to rail
- Richmond primary traffic conduit
- Loss of lanes
- Reduction size of lanes
- Congestion of N/S
- Does not have answer to those concerns
- Have not addressed cost – do not know about the infrastructure

- No way to expand in future to express
- Left turn access
- Need for parking garages
- Safety concern – address by providing police
- Maintain left turn lanes
- Schedule sequencing
- To address – raise light rail above Richmond
- Address by rescinding eminent domain to rail line only

If have to choose?

Richmond alignment (13)

US 59 alignment (5)

**Summary**

Preferred Alignment

- Richmond

Benefits

- Access to and from neighborhoods and businesses to the rest of the city
- Cost/benefit ratio
- Fewer cars on the road means less pollution

Concerns

- Short and long-term business impacts
- Congestion and loss of mobility
- Use of eminent domain for real estate development adding to congestions

## Workshop for the Kirby to Wheeler Station Segment (Group 2)

**1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?**

What excites you about the Richmond alignment?

- Access to businesses will improve if don't have enough parking
- Greenway Plaza – opportunity not to use vehicle at lunch
- Fewer cars on streets
- Need cross circulation – from 2 lines
- Avoid high price of parking
- Interconnectivity
- Improve quality of life
- Open up suburbs into town
- Disabled access
- Low income access
- Lack of train stops/transferring

What concerns you about the Richmond alignment?

- Parking/sidewalks no pedestrian traffic
- Right-of-way needs
- Serving both needs: cars and trains
- Business economic loss during construction and after
- Accidents – train and pedestrian
- Utility impacts
- Landscaping – replacement
- Flooding
- Cost if not supported by Culberson
- Property acquisition and notification

What concerns you about the SW Freeway alignment?

- Distance between stations
- Lack of access
- Elevation above bridges ugly, tacky
- Safety – emergency vehicles access
- High wind, high voltage
- Gradient changes
- Potential loss of Ervin Chew park
- Elevation outside/behind homes
- Noise pollution
- Ridership not enough
- No economic development opportunities
- Straight Wheeler to 59
- Cost?
- Historic structures impacts
- Handicapped access issue

- Concrete posts
- Stray current

## **2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?**

### Richmond alignment – what's positive

- Urban development
- Where the people are
- Connects activity centers
- Slower traffic
- Population growing – needs
- Get buses off of Richmond
- Create walkable environment
- Won't be elevated – at grade

### Richmond

- Utility lines on Richmond: storm sewers, gas lines, water lines. Maps should show utilities.
- Maps don't show bridges – photos are outdated. Need to be current.
- Need conceptual images. How high are bridges?
- Photos/maps need to accurately represent turns. More specific property impacts and more detailed.
- Ridership and cost information – want it
- Traffic flow impacts – reduce lanes on Richmond? How to maintain traffic capacity
- Hazard identification and severity study formalize
- Traffic impact studies – include fire station – Richmond and N.S. Streets
- Adjust signals
- Traffic at Wheeler and Main
- Street closures identified
- We don't want to lose traffic lanes and no closure of N.S. streets
- Noise impact studies

### **Summary**

#### Preferred Alignment

- Richmond (22)
- US 59 (2)

#### Benefits

- Increased ridership
- Interconnectivity to activity centers
- Relief to anticipated growth

#### Concerns

- Negative impacts during construction
- Traffic impacts on Richmond and on north/south streets in the area
- Flooding

## **Workshop for the UPRR to Kirby Segment (Group 1)**

### **1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?**

- Best federal funding
- Maximum ridership
- Google maps better how close (precise) alignment is
- Homes
- Federal funding ration that METRO uses does not reflect benefits of at-grade alignments
- Little change over period of time
- METRO has studied alignments since 1980's and still looking into alignments
- METRO has "bait and switched" alignment Westpark vs. Richmond – not voted for Westpark "corridor"
- Not taking cars off freeways – will kill traffic in neighborhoods
- Get on trains – don't have to worry about parking
- Need some sort of solution
- Uses METRO trains and bus looking forward to extended availability
- Anger has been excited cost to taxpayers
- Voted for Westpark line not Richmond
- No longer about mobility – but development
- Cummins alternative not exciting
- Exhaust/environmental concerns (air, trees) need to be addressed
- No credits from EPA
- Opportunity to improve Westpark quality of life (currently eyesore)
- Intersection at Wesleyan congested
- Want to hear official positive and mitigation aspects
- Rude and disrespectfulness encountered
- METRO is tone deaf when talking to community
- Mitigate bad aspects enhance (maximize) positive
- NOI purpose and need states service to Greenway Plaza – concerned it will not
- Concerned about number of stops and location 23 vs. 6 stations
- Ridership on Richmond low – trolleys would not be better
- No surface transportation to Greenway – buses better than trolley – more flexible
- Use cleaner fuel buses
- Using hybrid diesel – not cleaner

### **2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?**

- Original alignment better (Westpark railroad easement) and along US59
- Best value is alignment to be north of US59 – no alignments good
- Want alignment that has highest ridership
- Cummins alignment is best
- Best alignment is Cummins
  - Based on ridership, population, service
- Are there technical reasons to not go down Richmond to Galleria
- Support rail alignment that goes down Drexel or UPRR serves purpose and need

- Cummins not good because it has to cross freeway and take businesses
- Want METRO to walk area – no engineering by “seat of pants”
- Haven’t seen real plan
- Thrilled with Main Street line
- Homes along Westpark close to proposed rail line
- Consider connecting 12 Oaks Medical Center by Drexel to the Texas Medical Center
- Enjoy Main Street line – parallel streets along Main Street – no parallel along Richmond
- Businesses on Main wiped out
- Richmond has many things that is negative alignment
- Walk proposed line (METRO)
- Provide communication – where to send comments
- Come to meetings prepared
- Open communications with people
- Heard about meeting via e-mail, community association, ads
- Haven’t heard anything new – Cummins south along Westpark except elevation at Cummins – want renderings
- Want computer simulations of alignments – elevations and intersections
- Greenway Plaza – losing 12 feet traffic lanes along Richmond
  - Wipe out trees
- Why can’t rail go down US59?
- Commuter rail will go down US59?
- US59 people movers (elevated) would be good idea
- Don’t have enough information to chose alignment
- Lack of information
- Property values a concern
- Want traffic counts – concerned about METRO’s lack of concrete information
- No new information in order to comment on environmental impacts
- METRO has answers but won’t share
- Elevation, noise, vibration impacts need to be modeled for children and people who live near alignment
- What is consultants’ role? How long has consultant been working for METRO on this project?
- Need to spell out – we are still in scoping

## **Summary**

### Preferred Alignment

- Explain No Build and TSM alternatives
- No preferred alternative due to lack of:
  - Communication
  - Trust
  - Information

### Benefits

- No benefits because:
  - No answers
  - Studying too long
  - Not cost effective
  - Want cost per rider

## Concerns

- Noise
- Vibration
- Air
- Traffic
- Trees
- Privacy
- Public safety

## Workshop for the UPRR to Kirby Segment (Group 2)

\*more than one person supported

### 1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?

#### Images or Words/thoughts off top of head

- Crucial
- Convenient to use
- Accessible
- Increased congestion and noise\*
- Controversial
- Not on the ballot\*
- Reduced property value
- Increased property value
- Increased crime
- Concern about alignment going somewhere
- Decreased congestion
- Cheap way is not the way to go – in terms of crime
- Loss of trees
- Less vehicle emissions
- Success in other cities (New York and London)

#### Surprising

- Lack of information
- Low technology solution
- Lack of direction in terms of routes

#### Exciting

- Having a great mass transit system
- One stop ride
- Quality of life improved
- No longer driving – great thing
- Reduced auto emissions
- Independence from foreign oil\*
- Federal tax money returned to Houston
- Ability for non-drivers to get around city
- Healthier city

#### Concerns

- Low technology solutions
- Parking at stations
- Cost overruns like Boston
- Not going get to built
- Inconvenient to use
- Does not relieve major congestion from airport or suburbs

- Won't get built fast enough\*
- Congestion – ease of mobility
- Taking property
- Killing businesses
- Bringing crime
- Population growth (10 year projection)
- Reduced property values
- SUV's in 20 years driven by soccer mom
- 2 million more cars inside Loop 610

## **2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?**

### Benefits of the Westpark (Kirby) alignment

- more in line with vote
- minimizes impact to Richmond and shops
- least environmental impacts
- built quickly
- METRO owns land
- Pedestrian crosswalks would make it work

### Benefits of the Greenway Plaza alignment

- serve high density (employment and residential)\*
- federal funding available
- minimizes obstruction of crossing US59
- safety (at night)\*
- minimizes elevated rail over privately owned residences
- gets to businesses (more people oriented)
- most accessible
- closer to existing transportation system

### Benefits of the Cummins alignment

- Most adequately serves high density areas\*
- Safer
- Visually pleasing by Drexel
- Net reduction of cars on road
- Accessible
- Still serves Greenway

## **3. What challenges or concerns do you foresee given the proposed alignment? What can METRO do to address some of these challenges and concerns?**

### Challenges for Westpark (Kirby) alignment

- low ridership
- not pedestrian friendly
- no commerce (very limited)
- avoids high density areas
- safety

### Concerns for the Greenway Plaza alignment

- doesn't go far enough West on Richmond
- increased congestion/impaired mobility
- emergency vehicle access (south of Richmond)
- kills businesses
- kills trees and flowers
- does not adequately serve all of Greenway Plaza
- loss of existing traffic lanes or making them narrow
- does not totally serve residential needs
- increased pollution due to north/south traffic at Kirby, Shepard and Buffalo Speedway
- Lack of parking in the corridor
- Abuse of eminent domain

### Concerns for the Cummins alignment

- Congestion especially with new development\*
- Emergency vehicle access (12 Oaks Hospital)\*
- Passes by Israeli Consulate (demonstrations)
- Limited accessibility for residents of this area
- Increased accessibility for those who do not live in the area
- Existing congestion (this compounds problem)
- Noise (whistles)
- Impaired mobility due to loss of lanes
- Congestion
- Killing of business
- Increased crime
- Emergency vehicles will not be affected
- Construction concerns (i.e. Main Street – do not repeat that scenario)
- 360 residents will be landlocked by rail
- Mercedes Benz dealership currently receives car deliveries on Cummins
- Cummins goes through shopping center (how will that work?)
- Wesleyan Station does not have designated parking (concern for parking in residential neighborhoods)
- Impacts to trees and flowers – will METRO try to minimize impacts

### What METRO could do to address challenges and concerns?

- Go underground (subway in New York) addresses emergency vehicles and aesthetics
- Construction phasing – particularly at intersections – do it in small segments
- More stops to improve utilization and more practical
- Cummins – can become garden street like St. Charles in New Orleans
- Trees at Drexel and Richmond
- Use different designer than the one used for Main Street – finds current signaling confusing
- This should go to a popular vote on particular amenities
- Fewer stops
- Stick to what was voted for
- Pedestrian and ADA accessibility

- METRO should utilize HOV lanes to alleviate congestion on highways and leave streets alone\*
- Flooding is an issue (subway – look at old studies done by Mayor Whitmeyer)

## **Summary**

### Preferred Alignment

- Richmond/US 59/Westpark (Kirby) (13)
- Richmond/Westpark (Cummins) (9)
- Richmond/Westpark (Greenway Plaza) (3)
- No Build (1)

### Benefits

- Decrease congestion
- Greenway Plaza and Cummins
  - Accessibility
  - High density

### Concerns

- Increases congestion
- Business and residential impacts
- Crime

**UH Hilton**  
**March 27, 2007**  
**East Alignment Concentration**

**Workshop for the Wheeler Station to Ennis Segment**

\* more than one person supported

**1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?**

Quick thoughts

- Disruptive
- Disconnected

Any surprising information

- Alabama option
- No Elgin Street option

Excites about project

- Nothing
- The possibility that it may come down Wheeler
- The idea that it will connect areas that are not connected now
- Helps UH
- Alternatives to driving
- Job opportunities
- Cultural exchange opportunities
- makes it easier to get around Houston making it seem smaller

Concerns

- METRO is causing division – appeasing the wealthy – cost effectiveness appeasing politicians
- None of the routes presented take the Lower Third Ward into consideration – will cause a dividing line in the community
- The community most affected by the new transit system is the least involved in the transit-oriented businesses
- Concerned about properties being taken\*
- Concerned about elderly on Wheeler possibly backing out in the train
- Concern – Elgin too far from UH and TSU – Alabama better connection for university
- Elgin or Alabama – outside businesses on planning committee but not businesses in community
- School kids walking and have to cross rail (Wheeler)
- Bringing young adults into the planning process
- Equal treatment for each university in terms of accessibility
- Equal treatment of homeowners on alignment
- METRO will not listen
  - Be contacted and taken into consideration, all contacted – know before it's started we can't sit still

- Once decision made, want to know what it is
- Residents should be approached with ethics/compassion
- Transparency in process
  - Informing the public
  - Readily accessible
- Clarity
- That I am forced to move or do not have a choice
  - Rather than rail on Wheeler – why not a circular bus?
- Impacts for residents – residential areas
- METRO make meetings more accessible to the people in the community
- Advanced notice of meetings

## **2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?**

### Alignment Preference

Alabama alignment (6)

Wheeler alignment (3)

### What is attractive about Alabama alignment

- Less intrusive on residents
- Room for rail and traffic
- More feasible at intersections – less turning
- Serves all 3 schools

### What is attractive about Wheeler alignment

- More activity (business/economics)
- Gives greater potential to economic development of Dowling
- Less residential on Wheeler
- Better access to TSU and doesn't impact Alabama/Cuney Homes
- Concern that it will stop at Scott and not at Eastwood

## **3. What challenges or concerns do you foresee given the proposed alignment? What can METRO do to address some of these challenges and concerns?**

### Wheeler alignment

- Disruption of established communities
  - Take line along Blodgett

## **Summary**

### Alignment Preference

2 to 1 preference for Alabama (6/3)

- Alabama alignment (6)
- Wheeler alignment (3)

### Concerns with Alabama Alignment

- Loss of connections to TSU
- Cuney Homes

### Concerns with Wheeler Alignment

- Disruption of community
- Property loss
- Elderly community affected

Concerns with both alignments

- Disruption of community (immediate and long-term)
- Input from community needs to be reflected in decision-making
- No viable alternative to these 2 alternatives
- Pedestrian safety

## Workshop for the Ennis to Eastwood Transit Center Segment

### 1. Thinking about the video presentation/open house and looking at your handout – What words or images stand out for you? What was surprising? What excites you about this project? What concerns you?

- Some Cuney Homes residents confused about the alignments
- Concern: safety
  - Small children
  - Older adults and people with disabilities
- Surprise: Elgin to Eastwood T.C. alternative (pleasant)
- Surprise: going straight thru Alabama for safety of children and elderly and disabled people as well as public housing
- Opportunity to connect the Hispanic and the African American communities
- Like getting off at UH entrance and going to the art gallery in architecture school and music school
- Going to the T.C. – connects a huge area of residences as well as pedestrian and bike riders
- Connectivity
- Connecting both University ties, HCC, Rice, St. Thomas
- Concern: flooding under the freeway at Elgin
- Increase residential density – positive
- Barriers, fences and walkovers suggested to limit pedestrian access – also enclosures
- Cross streets should be open for pedestrians
- Children safety at Cuney Homes
- High residential turnover therefore education may not help
- METRO police officer to be present for children safety in mornings and evenings
- Riverside General Hospital served by Elgin alignment
- Concern: who would be first responders to an emergency – METRO PD, UHPD, TSUPD...???
- Who would have superseding power?
- There is a precedent of METRO PD, HPD, UHPD working together
- Texas Southern Charter School concerned about safety of children

### 2. With respect to the proposed alignments – Which is most attractive? Why?

- Wheeler/Ennis/Elgin preferred

#### Benefits

- Connectivity especially to Eastwood T.C.
- Safe route for Cuney Homes, all universities, etc.
- Serves UH better
- Fewer property impacts

### 3. What challenges or concerns do you foresee given the proposed alignment? What can METRO do to address some of these challenges and concerns?

#### Concerns

- What if the other group prefers Alabama – could cut off TSU
- Structures, barriers, etc should be aesthetically pleasing

- Traffic safety at intersections like UH entrance, Cullen
- Coordination between universities (UH,TSU) and METRO regarding parking and traffic flow and security
- Test - runs with express buses early on during planning to get people interested and build up ridership. Use dedicated buses in a preferred alignment route for LRT