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Houston City Council Member, District H

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Earlier this week on August 9th, TxDOT closed the “Yes/No” poll asking residents to either vote for the I-45 NHHIP as is, or to vote to remove the proposed project and the funding that goes with it. This online “survey” was simply more disingenuous public engagement by TxDOT. It was a false choice that didn’t accomplish anything productive or positive.

The position of the City, and the Mayor, and of myself continues to remain the same: **The choice we want, is to work together.** If the members of the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) that were appointed by Governor Abbott, would instruct TxDOT to **work together** with the City of Houston **instead of fighting us**, this has the potential to be a transformational project.

A project that **goes away**, does not get us to where we want. Nor will a project that is **just wrong**, get us to where we want. The reconstruction of I-45 needs to solve some serious existing problems, and it certainly doesn’t need to make matters worse for residents who live and work here.

For starters a successful project must address:

- Flooding issues that plague adjacent neighborhoods
- Traffic safety and accessibility on city streets
- Displacement of homes and businesses
- Disproportionate negative impact on minority and low-income populations
- Environmental and health concerns
- Focus on mobility, not just cars

Over the last few years, the City of Houston led a series of highly regarded public engagement exercises that resulted in the identification of critical issues and opportunities to refine and improve the project. The set of issues and opportunities identified different ways to achieve the City’s goals, with “Vision C” receiving the greatest amount of community support. A collaborative effort to refine the current inappropriate, inadequate design for a future version of I-45, should be guided by the lessons learned in developing “Vision C”.

The Harris County lawsuit has helped raise the profile of the disputed project, and bigger repercussions are thought to potentially lie with the Federal Highway Administration, who has paused the project with a Title VI review. Title VI guarantees equal access to all transportation programs that are financially assisted by the Department of Transportation regardless of race, color, or national origin. There is no legal timeframe for the federal government to respond.

Though the agenda has not yet been released, the TTC will meet on August 31st and will most likely consider the results of the TxDOT survey and whether to remove or keep the funding in place for I-45 NHHIP. We do not know the timeframe for when TxDOT may make decisions regarding what their next steps will be.

Thank you to everyone who has been engaged in this huge public effort. Your advocacy has mattered. Thank you for continuing to voice the consistent message, that **Houston deserves better**. It is critical to keep insisting that for the project to move forward, TxDOT must partner with Houston. **We must work together** to ensure that the reconstruction of IH-45 is a welcome addition to our city's infrastructure. We are now also at a point where there are a lot of unknowns and things are playing out on so many different levels. The fight is not over yet.

Sincerely,



Karla Cisneros

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