



Press Release

March 8, 2017

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TIGER and TxDOT's Transportation Enhancement Grants Fund New Trail Connections to University of Houston Campuses *Projects Part of BG2020 Goal to Connect Communities*

At 10:00 a.m. on March 9, 2017, the University of Houston, Houston Parks Board and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate the completion of the Brays Bayou Path: MLK Blvd to OST Trail Link and the start of construction for the "University Connections" Hike & Bike Bridge. Both Bayou Greenways 2020 projects create trails and trail links to unite communities and create more opportunity for neighborhoods to access greenspace. **The event will take place adjacent to the University of Houston at 4500 Martin Luther King Blvd (near the corner of MLK Blvd/Calhoun Road and Wheeler).**

"Projects like these highlight Houston's continuing commitment to creating trails and linking communities to greenspace and alternative transportation corridors across the city," said Mayor Sylvester Turner. "We are excited to see these links, which are part of the Bayou Greenways 2020 project, taking shape and linking neighborhoods."

The MLK Blvd to OST Trail link with cart path was funded through a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), USDOT grant. The project, referred to as "TIGER 6," has created a trail and cart path that will travel under Spur 5 and the Union Pacific Railroad, which provides an important connection to the U of H Energy Research Campus.

The MLK to OST Trail link is part of a \$30 million matching grant made possible through federal funds in the form of a \$15 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant. With the completion of this segment, five of the six TIGER projects will have been completed.

The University Connections Bridge is a separate project, federally funded through TxDOT's Transportation Enhancement Program. It connects the new Brays Bayou Path to the existing Brays Bayou Greenway hike and bike trails in MacGregor Park with a pedestrian and cyclist bridge over Brays Bayou.

"These two projects are exciting and useful additions, not only beautifying the area, but also making our campus – 'Houston's University' -- even more accessible to the community," said University of Houston President Renu Khator.

“We are thankful to all the partners involved in both projects,” said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. “It’s a great example of how partners can combine resources to benefit the public’s access to greenspace and expand transportation opportunities for everyone.”

Both projects are also part of the Bayou Greenways 2020 program and underscore the program’s goal of creating continuous greenways and hike and bike trails along Houston’s major waterways to enhance recreation, conservation and alternative transportation in Houston.

“We are delighted to celebrate with our partners the opening of this new stretch of Brays Bayou Greenway,” said Beth White, President and CEO of Houston Parks Board. “Not only will this be a great amenity for the students, faculty and staff of the University of Houston, it will enhance access to greenspace for families in surrounding neighborhoods.”

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), USDOT grant includes six separate projects designed to improve mobility in Houston by eliminating major gaps on primary off-street bicycle/pedestrian transportation routes and in the city’s bike grid. They are also expected to provide extensive connections to residences, employment centers and bus and rail transportation and complete a portion of the inner city bikeway plan for shared use paths. The expanded pathway system includes new directional signs and pedestrian amenities, including benches, bike racks, waste receptacles, lighting, trees and other landscaping, and an electric shuttle between two University of Houston campuses. The Houston Regional Bike/Pedestrian Connections to Transit projects include:

- 1) The White Oak Bayou Path: Alabonson Road/Antoine Drive (0.8-mile commuter extension of shared-use path) **COMPLETED**
- 2) The White Oak Bayou Path: 11th Street/Heights Bike Trail/Stude Park Links (1.4-mile gap closures and bridge construction project) **COMPLETED**
- 3) The White Oak Bayou Path: Connections to Residential Neighborhoods and Buffalo Bayou Path (0.2-mile gap closure project and 0.7-mile connections to shared-use path) **UNDER CONSTRUCTION**
- 4) The Buffalo Bayou Path: Smith Street/Travis Street Link (0.3-mile gap closure project) **COMPLETED**
- 5) East Downtown Connections: Transit/Residential/Commercial Connections (8.6-mile gap closures and key connections project) **COMPLETED**
- 6) Brays Bayou Path Gap: MLK/Old Spanish Trail Link (1.6-mile gap closure project and 0.6-mile alternative transit path) **COMPLETED**

Bayou Greenways 2020 is one of the most ambitious parks projects in the U.S. By transforming more than 3,000 acres of underutilized land along Houston’s major waterways into public, accessible greenspace, Bayou Greenways 2020 will create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails. The \$220 million project will connect people, places and greenspace while enhancing air and water quality, preserving flood-prone areas and stimulating economic development in Houston.

In 2012, thanks in part to the “Parks By You!” campaign, Houston voters overwhelmingly approved a bond proposal that set aside \$100 million for Bayou Greenways 2020. Houston Parks Board is raising a matching \$120 million and managing acquisition, design and construction of the Bayou Greenways.

About Houston Parks Board

*A nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing access to quality parks and greenspace for all people, **Houston Parks Board** creates, improves, protects and advocates for parkland in the Greater Houston region. Since 1976, the organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government and community relationships to improve parks large and small. Houston Parks Board is currently leading the transformational \$220 million Bayou Greenways 2020 project to create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston's major waterways. For more information, visit www.houstonparksboard.org.*

About Houston Parks and Recreation Department

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstontx.gov/parks.