



Public comments - NHHIP MOU Working Group Meeting 9/21/20
By Harrison Humphreys, AAH Transportation Policy Advocate

Good afternoon working group members, staff. My name is Harrison Humphreys and I am with Air Alliance Houston. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.

I gave comments prior to the meeting adjourning early a couple weeks ago, so I'll just briefly reiterate some of those sentiments here.

Following this discussion on the potential MOU the past two months has been disheartening. What should be a forward-thinking discussion about ways to work within existing frameworks to implement innovative redesigns that not only meet the needs of the growing region but also address the life-altering concerns of the communities most affected by this project, has instead been drug down into a frustrating fight by parties who refuse to acknowledge there are alternatives to continuing to try and fail at building roads faster than our population grows. At this point of the project, it's embarrassing that the policymakers dictating the future viability of transportation in this region refuse to recognize transportation planning realities long ago accepted and incorporated by more innovative regions. A preponderance of academic and even anecdotal evidence shows that expanding mainlane capacity will not solve the congestion issues. As Dr. Lewis stated during the last MOU meeting, we have seen time and time again we simply will never outbuild our congestion. It is well past time that we recognize this fact and begin seriously exploring other alternatives.

Outside of the evidentiary arguments, though, the purpose of this MOU process is to address the concerns of the vast number of Houstonians who made their voices heard and gave their input on this project. The past year's community engagement process yielded an overwhelming outpouring of opposition to plans that would rely on destroying communities to pursue ineffective freeway expansions. They instead asked for a cooperative design that incorporates multimodal infrastructure that is more equitable, more environmentally sustainable, and will ultimately go farther in addressing the issues that TxDOT is seeking to fix. This MOU and its language should reflect those asks. If this working group walks away with an MOU framework that doesn't adequately outline a forward-thinking vision of this project, that ignores the pleas of communities and the Mayor's invitation to cooperate, I firmly believe all parties involved will come to regret it. I know the people who will lose their homes and businesses will.

Finally, I think it would give some observers of this process some clarification if Ms. Eliza Paul could more clearly explain her comments towards the end of the meeting a few weeks ago, in which you made the claim that capacity expansion was necessary for whatever mode might eventually take up the corridor space. Could you clarify:

- Are you committing TxDOT to exploring converting these lanes to mass transit in the future?
- Are you relying on specific studies that have been conducted that show the extra capacity is needed for multimodal improvements?
- You said that that capacity could be used for other things long-term, but that it was needed short-term for congestion; I think clarifying long vs short term would give many some peace of mind.

Thank you for your time and allowing me the opportunity to provide comments.