



June 26, 2020

Good morning committee members, staff. My name is Harrison Humphreys and I am with Air Alliance Houston. I'll be speaking on item 5 on the agenda.

I think holding a robust discussion on an MOU is incredibly important. Composing it in such a way to include provisions that ensure accountability on TxDOT's part and including mechanisms to ensure TxDOT adheres to the communities' wishes should be at the forefront of the discussion. Given this, I think it's important to address some discrepancies we've seen on TxDOT's part prior to having this discussion.

Transportation Commissioner Laura Ryan and TxDOT staff continue to hide behind the excuse that the asks being made by the City and the people most affected by this project can't be addressed until after the record of decision because they deal with detailed designs. That is not an accurate representation of the issue at hand. The people in the communities along the corridor and the Mayor and City Council have made it clear they support a fundamental reshaping of the parameters of the project, not just tweaks to the final design. And we thank Mayor Turner for making it clear, quote, "we will, without hesitation, not support the funding decision" if TxDOT fails to "design a project with positive impacts for the community, the City of Houston, and the greater region." Cutting down the highway lane footprint across entire sections of the project is not a detailed design issue that requires a ROD - it's a fundamental aspect of the project that needs to be committed to prior to these major stage gates.

I'd like to also discuss Commissioner Ryan and TxDOT staff's tendency to allude to quote "certain things we can and cannot do" without specifying what those things are. I think we can agree that some asks land in a statutory grey area that need more study before TxDOT can definitively sign off on them. However, some of the larger asks, such as heavily reducing the footprint of the project, do not. And TxDOT staff seem to refuse to want to give a definitive answer on some of the most important demands of the City and the community. As a result, what's been touted as a transparent public engagement process is clouded in confusion and seemingly almost purposeful misdirection. TxDOT cannot continue to hide behind the complexity of the project and expect to balk on making explicit commitments the City has asked for.

TxDOT has said a lot about going above and beyond to engage the public and incorporate their input. Well, the public has made itself abundantly clear over the past year on what it wants to see out of this project. If TxDOT does not make a serious effort to solidify concrete

commitments to the asks of City leadership and the pleas of the communities most affected by this project, they will do irreparable damage to public trust in the institution. Any MOU generated here must explicitly outline the asks TxDOT will commit to.

This is a moment where we should truly reflect on how our governing practices shape our society. We have an opportunity to create a project that can benefit the entire region, but most importantly truly serves the people of Houston historically wronged by past transportation planning practices. Please keep this in mind when discussing this MOU.

Respectfully,  
Harrison Humphreys