



To whom it may concern,

Our organization, Air Alliance Houston, would like to express concerns about the structure and content of the Gulf Freeway Planning and Linkages (PEL) Study survey opened earlier this month (project reference number: Gulf Freeway PEL: 0500-03-633). We understand that the PEL study's purpose is to help determine a "universe of alternatives" for a potential project along the I-45 South corridor. In order to design and execute the best project possible, it is imperative that TxDOT take a broad view of potential costs and benefits of different project designs. In the past, our organization has urged TxDOT district employees and leadership to consider factors such as accessibility, equity, and sustainability, not just mobility and safety. We do not feel that this survey reflects a broad consideration of these factors, and it is structured in such a way to encourage a project design that continues to rely on highway expansion as a means to improve mobility for all users.

While the survey begins with this statement: "The purpose of this survey is to obtain input on the universe of alternatives," the questions were narrowly tailored to discuss lane expansions. A true "universe of alternatives" should consider all potential methods to achieve project goals. A few questions addressed transit and active transportation options, but not in a way to suggest that a transit-focused approach would be considered in the 'universe of alternatives.' At no point in the survey was there an option to indicate a preference for transit-only lanes or additional bike and pedestrian facilities and connections *without* adding additional Single Occupant Vehicle capacity. This is unacceptable, particularly at such an early stage of the project development process.

The "Tradeoffs" section is incredibly misleading, and the scope of options provided is too limited. For example, some respondents may not want to add either General Use or Special Use lanes; requiring them to choose one creates a misleading answer. Additionally, it is not representative of what a 'tradeoff' means. A better representation of potential tradeoffs should be: adding mainlanes with additional right of way (ROW) vs. maintaining existing community character.

The next question in "Tradeoffs" has the same issue as the first: forcing a respondent to pick between two undesirable options will produce inaccurate results. Again, it does not really accurately represent what the 'tradeoff' is for these decisions. Noting that adding lanes may require additional ROW is not a sufficient explanation of the potential consequences of acquiring additional ROW.

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We are disappointed about the structure and content of this survey. Given the dialogue occurring in Houston about highways and how they affect our city, we expect TxDOT to approach new projects with a much broader vision in improving mobility, accessibility, and sustainability. We envision future TxDOT highway projects that accommodate all modes and encourage multimodal usage from residents and visitors. We felt unable to express that vision and preference in your survey. Our organization urges TxDOT to take down the survey and rework it to offer a truly comprehensive range of potential alternatives. We would be more than happy to offer assistance in this retooling.

Regards,

Air Alliance Houston
Transportation Team

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