



NEARTOWN
Association

February 17, 2007

Mr. Frank J. Wilson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas
1900 Main Street
P.O. Box 61429
Houston, Texas 77208-1429

Re: Metro Solutions Phase 2 University Corridor

Dear Mr. Wilson,

In January 2006 Neartown Association conveyed to you our support of the University Corridor (the "Corridor"), specifically supporting a Richmond Rail alignment for the western segment of the Corridor.

As you know, Neartown Association is a non-profit "umbrella" civic organization representing an area of over 20 neighborhood associations, businesses, non-profit and educational institutions and over thirty thousand residents. We are designated as Super Neighborhood Number 24 by the City of Houston. Our borders are roughly Taft on the east, Highway 59 on the south, S. Shepherd on the west and Allen Parkway on the north.

Over the past year, Neartown has worked actively with Metro through the planning and decision-making process to ensure our concerns would be addressed. We believe Metro has worked with us in good faith and has substantially addressed and incorporated our concerns into their planning process. We have also continued to be supportive of the process itself, allowing Metro to review all options for the proposed western segment of the Corridor to determine which alignments made sense from a rider ship and cost effectiveness perspective.

Recently Metro's Board of Directors approved six route options with which to continue more refined analyses for the University Corridor, three of which pertained to the western segment of the Corridor which includes Neartown. The western options include Richmond from Wheeler Station to Cummins to Westpark, terminating at Hillcroft Transit Center (commonly referred to as the "Cummins" option), Richmond from Wheeler Station to Greenway Plaza Drive A to Westpark, terminating at Hillcroft Transit Center (commonly referred to as the "Greenway" option) and Richmond from Wheeler Station to Montrose to north US-59 frontage road (elevated) to east of Kirby to Westpark, terminating at Hillcroft Transit Center (the Montrose/US-59 option). Neartown's

decision to support a Richmond alignment was based upon our belief that rail on Richmond Avenue would offer the most benefit to the greatest number of residents and stakeholders within our neighborhood.

Based upon the final three options approved for further analysis by Metro for the western segment, Neartown fully endorses and supports the Cummins alignment option. We believe the Cummins option best supports our desire for neighborhood friendly rail, maximizes rider ship and appears to be the most cost effective.

On the contrary, Neartown finds the Montrose/US 59 option to be the total antithesis to neighborhood friendly rail and as a result, vehemently opposes this option. An elevated rail structure along US-59 would destroy historic neighborhoods through property condemnation and destroy the quality of life for the Roseland Estates, Castle Court, Richwood Place neighborhoods, including the City's Ervan Chew Park on Dunlavy. It was due to Neartown's efforts that Ervan Chew Park got a new lease of life. We would hate to see the neighborhood lose what little green space we have available to us. Furthermore, this option would destroy existing infrastructure along the north side of the freeway as well as constrict traffic lanes during and post construction.

We find this option irresponsible and unacceptable. Neartown supports rail that will provide for urban mobility and will enhance our quality of life, benefiting our City for generations to come. The Montrose/US 59 option provides neither.

In our letter sent to you in January 2006, we included a list of requirements for which our support for rail on Richmond would be contingent. Over the past year, we have had countless meetings with our neighborhood associations, collecting additional comments, feedback and requests for which we would like to convey. These considerations are in addition to the requirements set forth in our original letter and are noted as follows:

1. It is critical that METRO's planning process address the need for full ingress and egress to neighborhoods bordering Richmond Avenue. This provision is essential to serve such historic areas as Castle Court and Richwood Place (bound by the Richmond Avenue/US-59/major traffic artery S. Shepherd) as well as Roseland Estates and First Montrose Commons (bound by Montrose Boulevard and Richmond Avenue). These neighborhoods also need left turn capabilities both from and onto Richmond Avenue from their respective neighborhood streets. Furthermore, existing left turn capabilities onto Richmond Avenue from both S. Shepherd and Montrose should be preserved to protect these neighborhoods from cut-through traffic.
2. Rail stations shall provide for adequate parking. Parking is an enormous challenge for our neighborhoods; this problem must not be compounded by stations having inadequate parking capacity. It is our preference that neighborhood-friendly structured parking be both aesthetically pleasing and provide for ground-level retail development. The parking must provide not only for cars, but also for scooters and bicycles.

3. In order to maximize station accessibility, we request a dual station located at the intersection of Richmond and Montrose on the west side of Montrose. Neartown requests this placement instead of the dual or split station located on the east side of the intersection, as contemplated in several METRO renderings. We believe that a dual station placed on the west side of the intersection will provide better accessibility for both St. Thomas University and the Menil facilities. As noted in our earlier letter, we also request a station located at the intersection of Richmond Avenue and Dunlavy or in close proximity, with consideration given to the existing fire station at this intersection.

We believe that with proper planning and leadership, neighborhood friendly rail can be achieved with the vision of connecting our urban centers. Based upon the facts presented to us, we believe the Cummins option provides our City with the best option.

It is our belief that well planned and executed neighborhood friendly rail can coexist with the existing urban character that our neighborhood has to offer. With the proper leadership from our local, state and federal officials, civic and business groups we can build for our City's future and yet preserve the distinctive character that makes our neighborhoods unique.

Now is the time for leadership and a vision for tomorrow, not politics driven by a vocal anti-rail minority whose motives are self-serving, from an ideology built on yesterday. We face a critical moment in our City's future where we can lay the groundwork for a world class transit system.

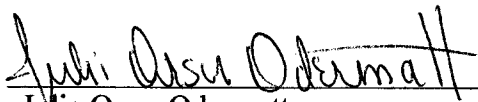
Contrary to the belief of a few, Richmond Avenue belongs to the citizens of Houston and is inextricably woven into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods such as Richwood Place, Castle Court, Roseland Estates and First Montrose Commons.

NearTown represents these neighborhoods and we want neighborhood friendly rail on Richmond. NearTown challenges METRO to look beyond the politics of today and select an alignment that will provide efficient and effective transportation options for the City's urban activity centers to serve generations now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Allen Ueckert
President



Julie Orser Odermatt
President
Roseland Estates Civic Association



Robert Power
President
First Montrose Commons Association



Laura Mullen
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Richwood Place Civic Association



Adra B Hooks
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