



Downtown  
Redevelopment  
Authority

## **Board of Directors Meeting**

March 12, 2024

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, Number Three  
City of Houston

**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**March 12, 2024**

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE  
DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

February 13, 2024

The Board of Directors (the "Board") of the Downtown Redevelopment Authority (the "Authority") convened in regular session, in person and open to the public, inside the H-Town Conference Room at the Authority's office, located at 1221 McKinney Street, Suite 4250, Houston, TX 77010, on February 13, 2024, and the roll was called of the duly constituted officers and members of the Board, to wit:

Curtis Flowers	Chair
Michele Sabino	Vice Chair
Barry Mandel	Secretary
Keith Hamm	Treasurer
Regina Garcia	Director
James Harrison	Director
Kirby Liu	Director
Tiko Reynolds-Hausman	Director
William Taylor	Director

and all of said persons were present except for Secretary Mandel. Also attending were Allen Douglas, Executive Director ("ED") of the Authority; Kris Larson, President of the Authority; Jana Gunter, Director of Finance; and staff members Brett DeBord, Jacque Gonzalez, Cassie Hoeprich, Luis Nunez, Jamie Perkins, Albert Sanchez, Ann Taylor and Candace Williams, all with the Authority; Algenita Davis, consultant to the Authority; and Clark Lord with Bracewell, outside counsel to the Authority.

In addition, Anna Forrester and Cibele Romani with ARUP were invited to give a presentation on the pedestrian street lighting study. Andrew Busker with the City of Houston's Office of Economic Development attended from the public.

**DETERMINE QUORUM; CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Flowers conducted a roll call and quorum was established. The meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m.

**INTRODUCTIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Flowers invited meeting attendees to introduce themselves and welcomed all. Next, he asked if there were any comments from the public. There were no comments from the public.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Board considered approving the minutes of the January 9, 2024 regular joint board meeting. Chair Flowers asked the Board for questions or revisions.

Hearing none, Chair Flowers called for a motion, moved by Treasurer Hamm; seconded by Director Garcia; and the minutes of the January 9, 2024 regular board meeting were approved as presented.

**FINANCE MATTERS**

**Check Register – January 2024**

Chair Flowers invited Jana Gunter to provide an update on finance matters for the month of January. Ms. Gunter shared highlights from the January check register, then called for questions. No discussion occurred or questions were not asked.

Chair Flowers called for a motion to accept the January 2024 check register; moved by Director Taylor, seconded by Treasurer Hamm; and the Board accepted the January 2024 check register as presented.

### **PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING STUDY & MASTER PLAN**

Chair Flowers invited President Larson to open the discussion. He gave a brief overview of the pedestrian lighting project and introduced Anna Forrester and Cibele Romani with ARUP. Ms. Forrester and Ms. Romani shared a presentation with their findings from a lighting study conducted by ARUP throughout downtown. The study featured examples of poorly lit areas along downtown sidewalks and streets, and what ARUP can do to remedy this issue. The focus was centered on improving the safety and visibility of people, places, and things throughout downtown at night, while also implementing a lighting system that is both functional and visually appealing. Questions were asked and answered. President Larson stated this project is included in the 2024 budget, and an authorization to move ahead with the lighting project will be presented soon. No action was required at this time.

### **CHI TOP 20 FOR 2024**

Chair Flowers asked President Larson to continue. He began with a brief overview of Central Houston's Top 20 Strategic Actions for 2024, noting that all staff participated in the development of these goals, which align with the Vision and Mission of the organization.

Next, President Larson called on staff members to speak about each of the Top 20 initiatives: (i) Cassie Hoeprich spoke on the production and promotion of economic development materials, including quarterly reports, and placemaking to enhance connections to downtown destinations; (ii) President Larson spoke on establishing new and nurturing existing partnerships with civic leaders; (iii) Ann Taylor spoke about creating communication tools to update the community on the impacts of segment 3 of the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP); (iv) Albert Sanchez presented on utilizing Central Houston Civic Improvement as a vehicle to match federal and philanthropic grants to enhance efforts with homeless outreach, public safety, and the NHHIP; (v) Luis Nunez spoke about goals with the NHHIP, with a focus on segment 3, and the EaDo Cap; and (vi) Jacque Gonzalez touched on enhancing street lighting, lighting for murals and engineering the Main Street Promenade.

Questions asked and answered, and discussion ensued on each of these topics. ED Douglas noted staff will continue presenting the remaining goals at the March Board meeting. No action was required.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

ED Douglas announced a workshop about affordability for conversions and DLI 2.0 will be scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup>. He stated expert panelists will be present at this workshop, speaking on topics ranging from the basics of real estate to the complexities of affordable housing. He invited and encouraged the Board to attend, noting an invite will be distributed soon. No further business was brought forth before the Board.

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

Chair Flowers announced dates for upcoming Board and Collaborative Committee meetings as follows:

- Connect, Enhance, & Thrive Downtown – Tuesday, **February 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM**
- Board of Directors – Tuesday, **March 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was called to adjourn at 1:46 PM.

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Michele Sabino, Vice Chair acting as Secretary  
Downtown Redevelopment Authority  
("Authority")

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE  
TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONE NUMBER THREE**

February 13, 2024

The Board of Directors (the "Board") of the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Number Three (the "Zone") convened in regular session, in person and open to the public, inside the H-Town Conference Room at the Zone's office, located at 1221 McKinney Street, Suite 4250, Houston, TX 77010, on February 13, 2024, and the roll was called of the duly constituted officers and members of the Board, to wit:

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Michele Sabino, Vice Chair acting as Secretary  
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Number  
Three ("Zone")

# Check register for February 2024

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- Total checks issued in February 2024 were \$998K
  - Woodbranch Tower LLC - \$727,037
    - 2022 DLI payment
  - Central Houston, Inc.
    - Administrative Contractors - \$115,785
  - Ann Harris Bennett
    - Property Taxes for Trebly Park - \$99,813
  - W.M. Jones & Company, Inc.
    - Liability Insurance for Trebly Park - \$27,122

**MAIN STREET MARKET SQUARE**  
 AP Check Register (Current by Bank)  
 Check Dates: 2/1/2024 to 2/29/2024

Check No.	Date	Status*	Vendor ID	Payee Name	Amount
<b>BANK ID: OP - JPMORGAN CHASE BANK, N.A.</b>					<b>101.000</b>
3125	02/01/24	F	3025	CENTRAL HOUSTON, INC	\$115,785.00
3126	02/01/24	V 2/1/24	3025		
3127	02/01/24	V 2/1/24	3025		
3128	02/01/24	V 2/1/24	3025		
* 3130	02/16/24	F	3703	HOUSTON DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT	\$11,412.33
*					
3131	02/19/24	F	9930	WOODBANCH TOWER LLC	\$727,037.00
* 2183439	02/15/24	N	2070	BRACEWELL LLP	\$4,325.00
*					
* 2183441	02/15/24	N	4986	RYAN M. LeVASSEUR	\$10,000.00
*					
* 881572	02/09/24	N	9905	W.M. JONES & COMPANY, INC	\$27,122.00
*					
* 881578	02/09/24	N	3078	CORE DESIGN STUDIO	\$2,500.00
*					
* 9421124	02/06/24	N	3203	ANN HARRIS BENNETT	\$99,813.18
*					
<b>BANK OP REGISTER TOTAL:</b>					<b>\$997,994.51</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL :</b>					<b>\$997,994.51</b>

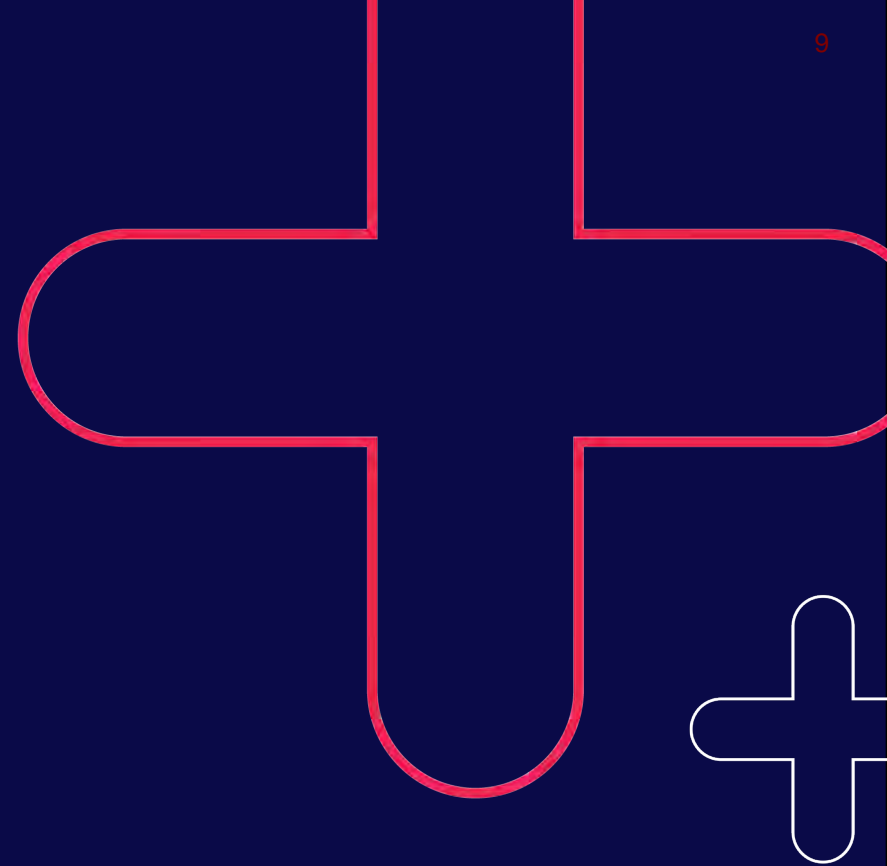


CONTINUATION OF

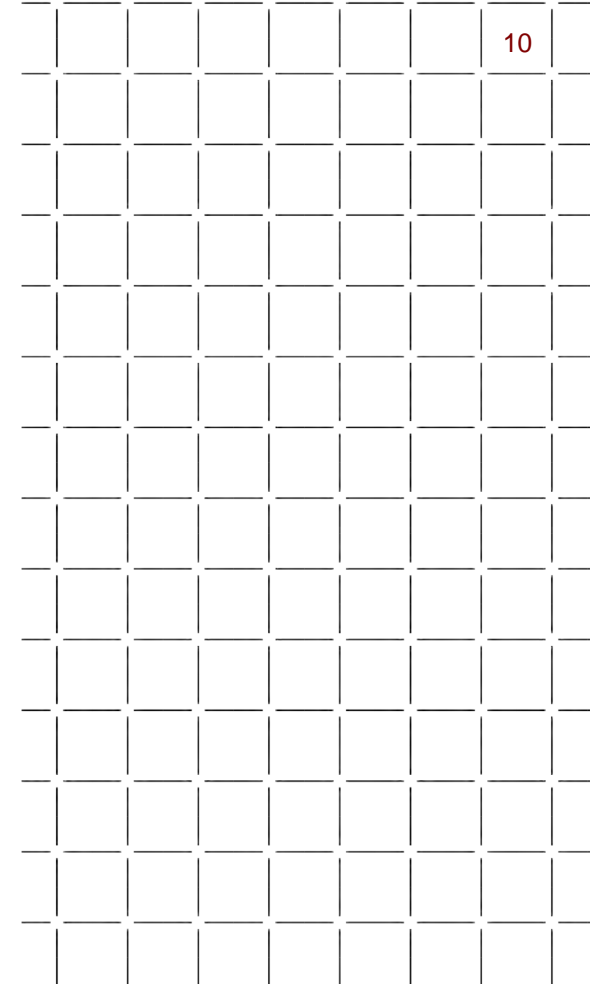
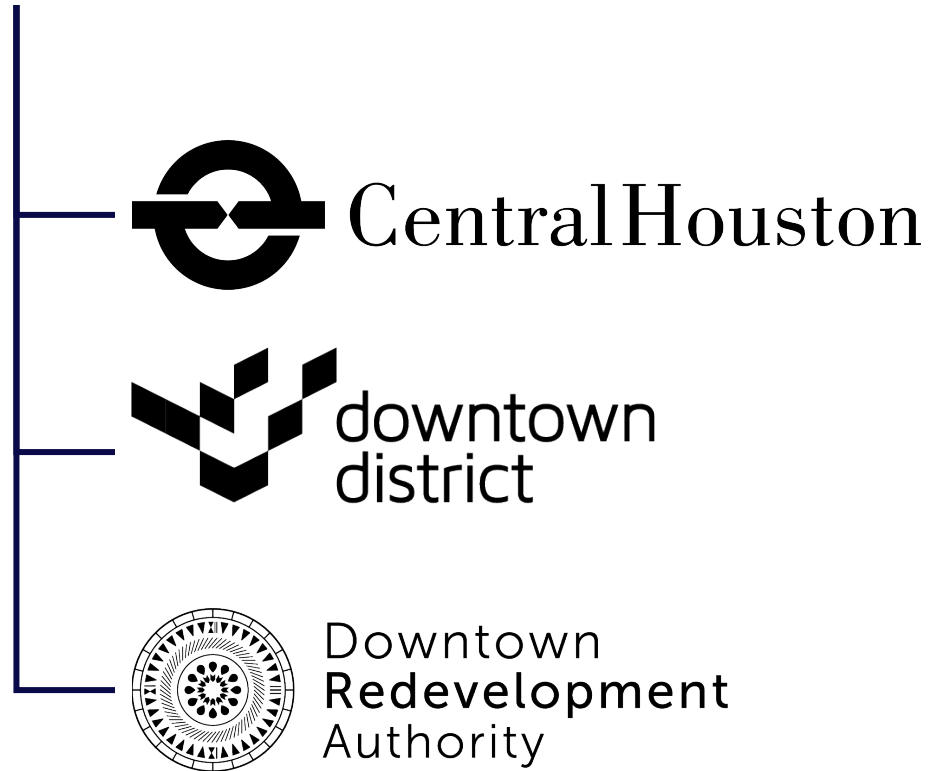
# DOWNTOWN'S TOP 20

STRATEGIC ACTIONS  
FOR 2024

DOWNTOWN  
HOUSTON+



# DOWNTOWN HOUSTON+



# DOWNTOWN'S TOP 20

STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR 2024

**DOWNTOWN  
HOUSTON+**

downtown district    Central Houston    Downtown Redevelopment Authority

## STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1 Champion major projects, initiatives and investments that improve Downtown
- 2 Enhance and maintain a comfortable, welcoming, and well-managed public realm
- 3 Drive vibrancy through improved street-level connectivity, a commitment to walkability and inclusive programming strategies
- 4 Foster a vital and thriving economy through business growth, residential expansion, and enhanced reasons to be in Downtown
- 5 Develop a hivemind of intelligence and goodwill by genuinely engaging and convening stakeholders

# 2024 AGENDA FOR ACTION



**X = Covered in February**

**● = Review in March**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <del>X</del> Create fund development strategy & pursue grants that expand impact                   | ● Identify and install distinctive, strategically positioned 2024 holiday décor |
| <del>X</del> Build new relationships bolstering DTH+'s engagement with Houston's diverse community | ● Re-envision and deploy new street pole banners                                |
| <del>X</del> Establish new and nurture existing partnerships with civic leaders                    | ● Develop a special events & programming strategy                               |
| <del>X</del> Create tools to communicate NHHIP Segment 3's schedule & community impact             | ● Establish a third-party event hosting program for DTH+ parks                  |
| <del>X</del> Position the EaDo cap project for federal grant submission                            | ● Foster a new homeless engagement-focused unit within safety program           |
| <del>X</del> Advance engineering for Main Street Promenade   | ● Pilot a Flock camera network  |
| ● Complete Montrose St. Bridge design & engineering  | ● Produce a storefront recruitment strategy & support program                   |
| ● Expand ability to facilitate office conversions  | <del>X</del> Publish and promote quarterly market reports                       |
| ● Refresh Downtown Living Initiative to attract a broader spectrum of households                   | <del>X</del> Enhance murals through façade lighting                             |
| <del>X</del> Construct priority initiatives from pedestrian lighting master plan                   | <del>X</del> Plan for and enhance connections among Downtown destinations       |

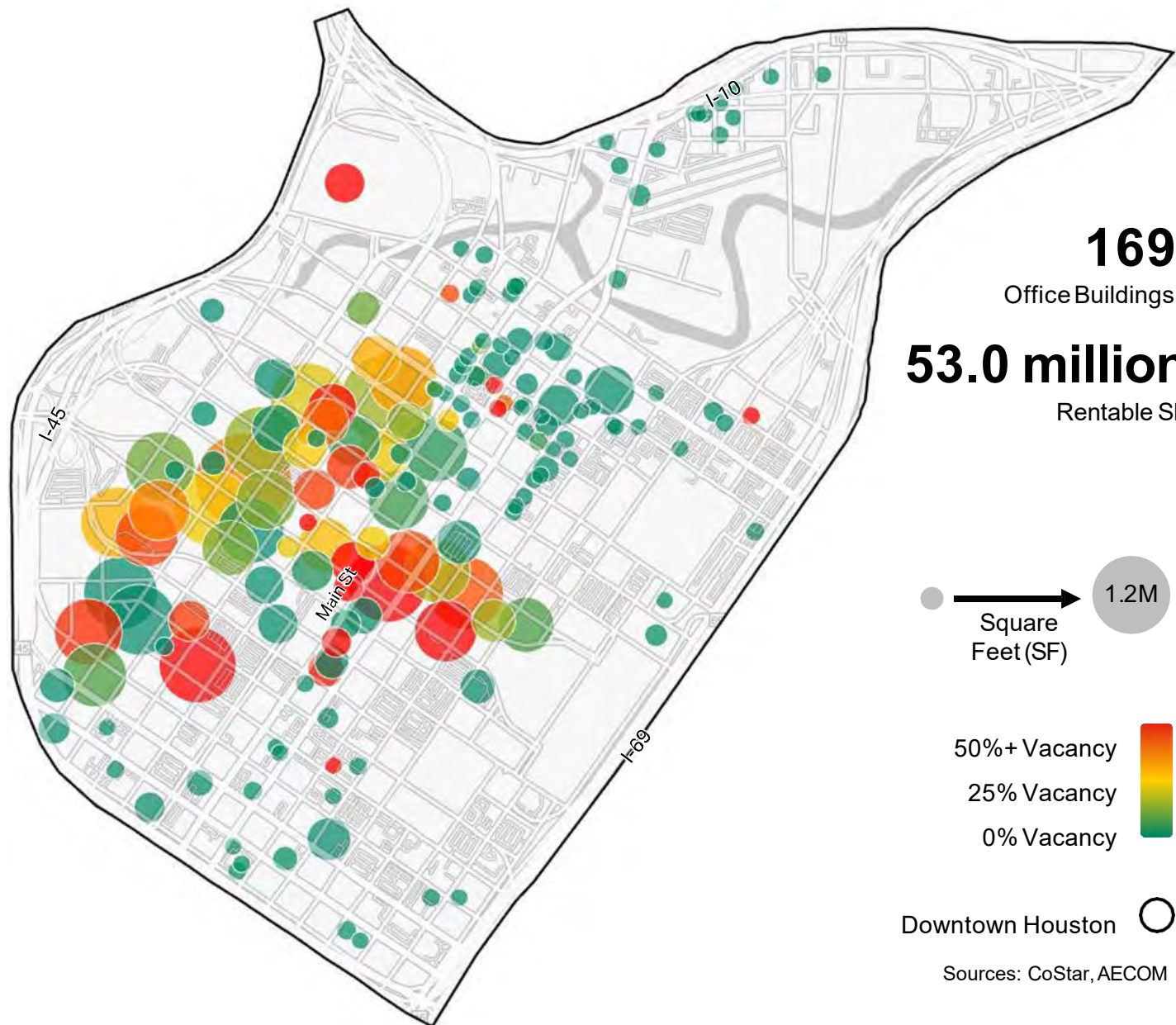
# **EXPAND ON THE ABILITY TO FACILITATE OFFICE CONVERSIONS**



Downtown  
Redevelopment  
Authority

# OFFICE MARKET CONTEXT

- Average vacancy rate of 24%
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest among 35 largest US Cities



# CONVERSION CANDIDATES

## The Challenge

- 37 buildings holding 53% of available office space DT are conversion candidates (28M SF total)
- 22 of those 37 buildings are >40% vacant (14M SF in total)
- 23 of those 37 buildings built between 1975-1986 (20M SF in total)
- Large floorplates and remaining tenants

Property Address	Built	RBA (SF)	Total Score
1021 Main St	1960	608,660	26
919 Milam St	1956	542,078	25
708 Main St	1923	98,253	24
808 Travis St	1941	599,107	23
1415 Louisiana St	1983	520,602	22
800 Bell St	1962	1,314,350	22
700 Milam St	1975	694,021	22
1001 Texas Ave	1982	119,436	21
1010 Lamar St	1981	277,991	21
1600 Smith St	1984	1,098,399	21
1301 Fannin St	1983	369,486	21
1001 McKinney St	1947	375,440	20
440 Louisiana St	1983	379,382	20
1331 Lamar St	1983	985,896	20
1315 St Joseph Pky	1984	170,554	19
601 Jefferson St	1973	1,047,748	19
711 Louisiana St	1975	666,762	19
801 Louisiana St	1978	105,145	19
1001 Louisiana St	1962	937,003	18
1221 McKinney St	1977	1,065,215	18
1301 Fannin St	1983	882,539	18
401 Franklin St	1962	114,650	18
1200 Smith St	1978	986,229	18
1001 Fannin St	1981	1,385,212	17
801 Travis St	1981	222,192	17
909 Fannin St	1974	1,024,956	17
430 Lamar St	1928	60,369	17
712 Main St	1929	794,186	17
1100 Louisiana St	1980	1,327,882	16
1801 Main St	1957	219,054	15
1301 McKinney St	1982	1,247,061	15
1111 Bagby St	1986	1,149,635	15
333 Clay St	1980	1,193,697	15
500 Dallas St	1972	975,306	15
1000 Louisiana St	1982	1,721,242	14
811 Louisiana St	1970	588,423	13
700 Louisiana St	1983	1,281,007	13

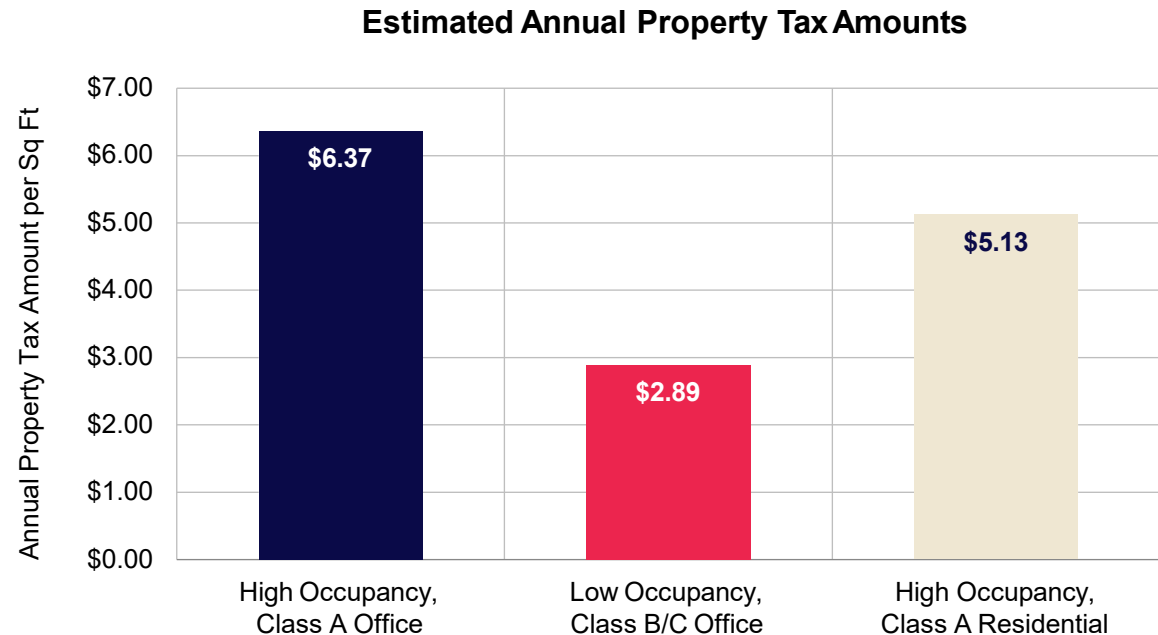
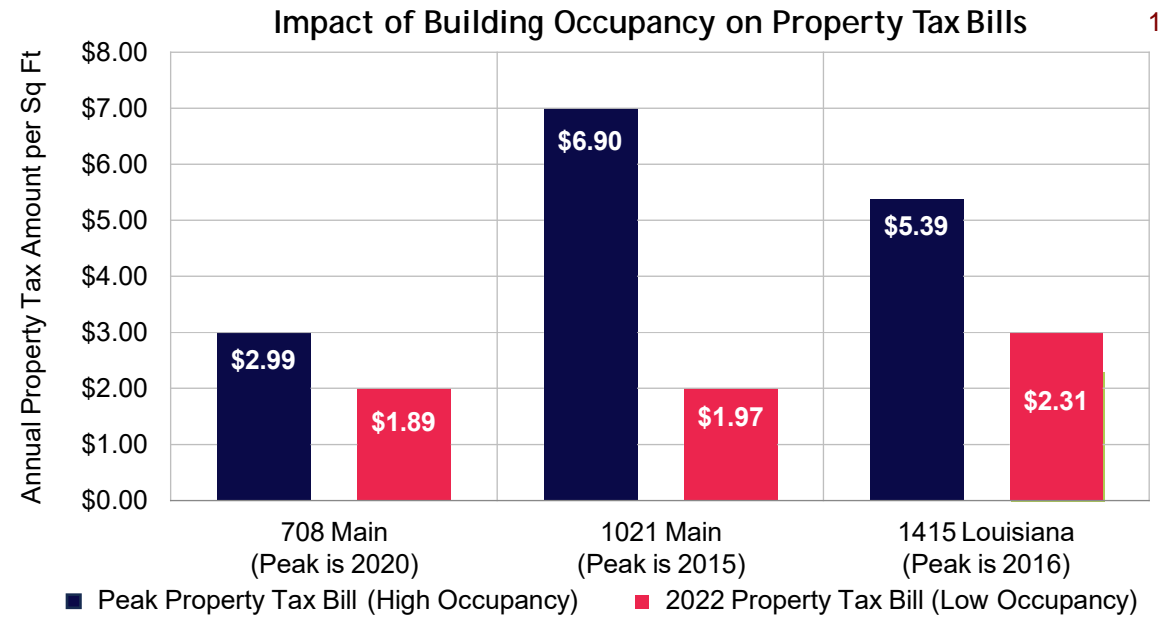
# FISCAL IMPACT

## Cost of the “Do Nothing” Scenario

- Declining office building occupancy = declining values
- Ripple effect reducing value

## Benefit of Incentivizing Conversion

- Incentives recouped through the long-term boost in property tax revenue
- Ripple effect enhances values
- Amenities increase community vibrancy and value
- Inclusive residential offerings boost tenant absorption rate





# POLICY & PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS



## Financial Incentive Structure

- Enhanced tax incentive program
- Partnering with other taxing units
- Public Facility Corporation vehicles on select properties
- State and Federal funding



## Project Selection Criteria

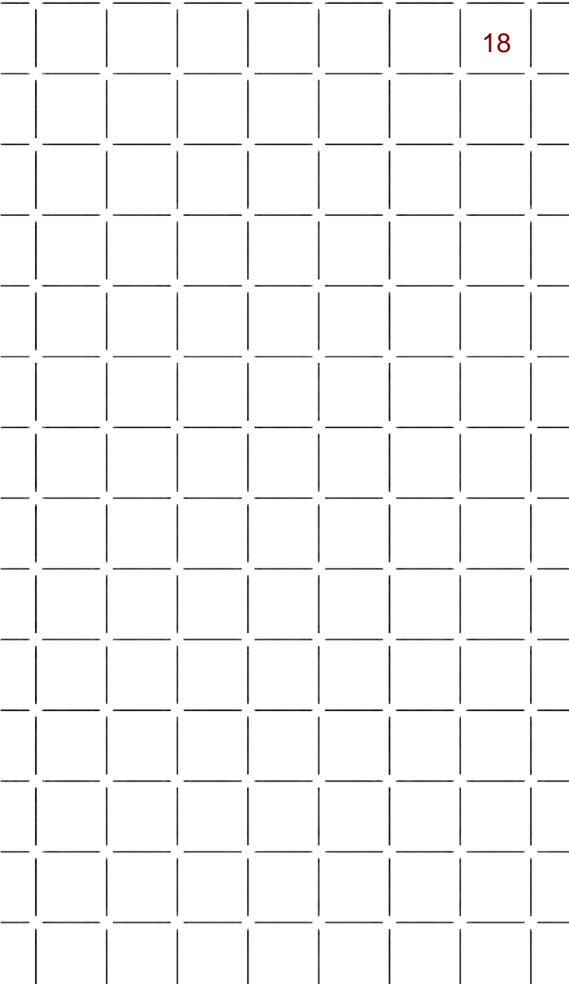
- Chronic high availability
- Low acquisition costs
- Residential and/or adaptive reuse experience
- Historic tax credit eligibility
- Strategic neighborhood amenities
- Impactful unit pricing



## Technical Assistance Program

- Office conversion liaison
- Streamline permitting process
- Concierge for historic tax credits
- Address lease burden

# **REFRESH DOWNTOWN LIVING INITIATIVE**



Downtown  
Redevelopment  
Authority

# DOWNTOWN LIVING INITIATIVE 2.0

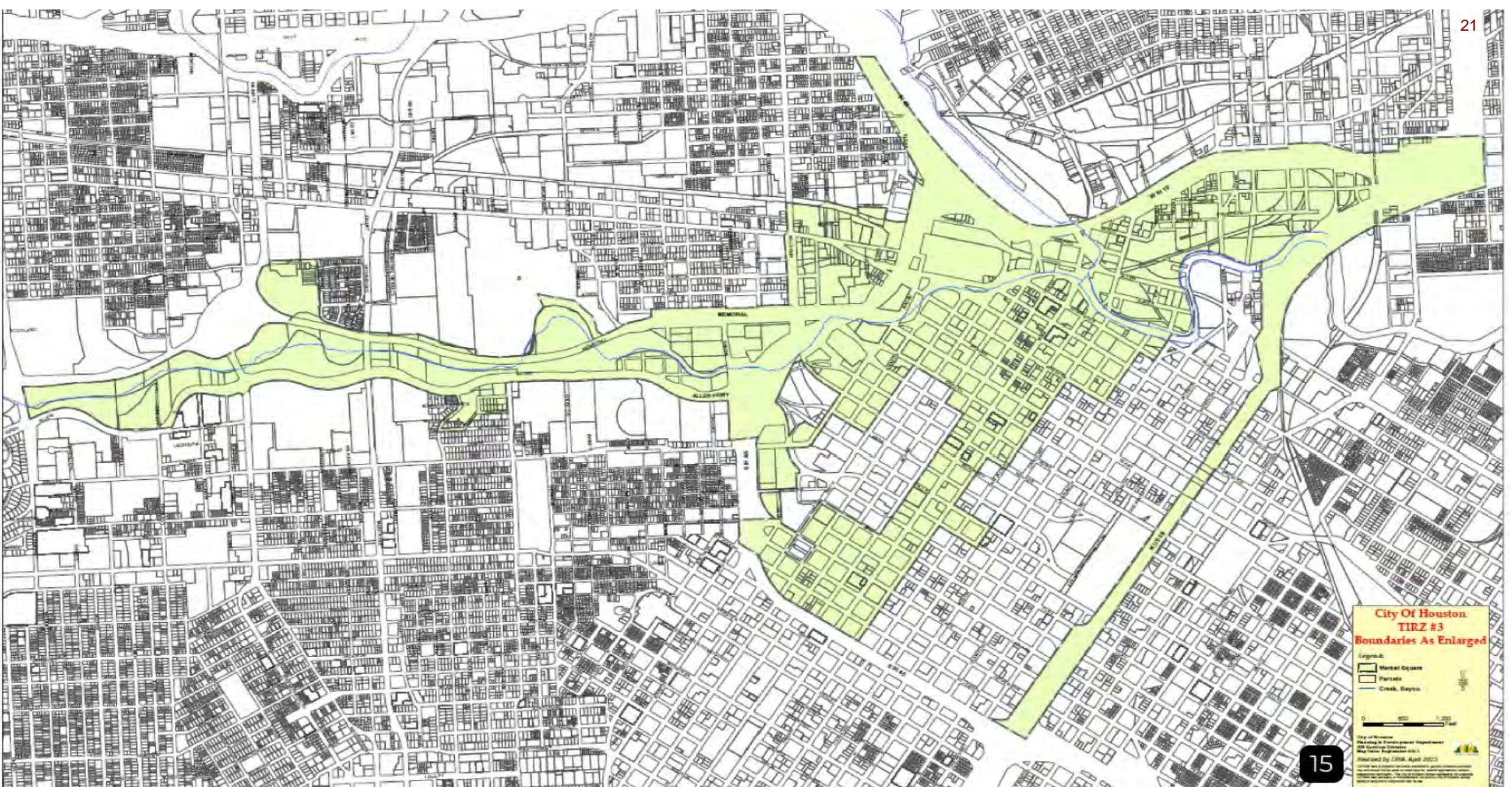
- Reignites residential population base
- Complements retail recruitment efforts
- Activates pedestrian realm
- Creates a genuine “neighborhood”



# **COMPLETE DESIGN & ENGINEERING FOR THE MONTROSE BRIDGE**



Downtown  
Redevelopment  
Authority



**City Of Houston  
TIRZ #3  
Boundaries As Enlarged**

Legend:  
 ■ Market Square  
 □ Parcels  
 — Creek, Bayou

City of Houston  
 Planning & Development Department  
 May 2019, August 2021  
 Revised by LPHK, April 2023

15







my Steele Dog Park  
sh dog park with a pond

24

Tolerance  
(Plensa) Statues

Buffalo Bayou  
Park Parking

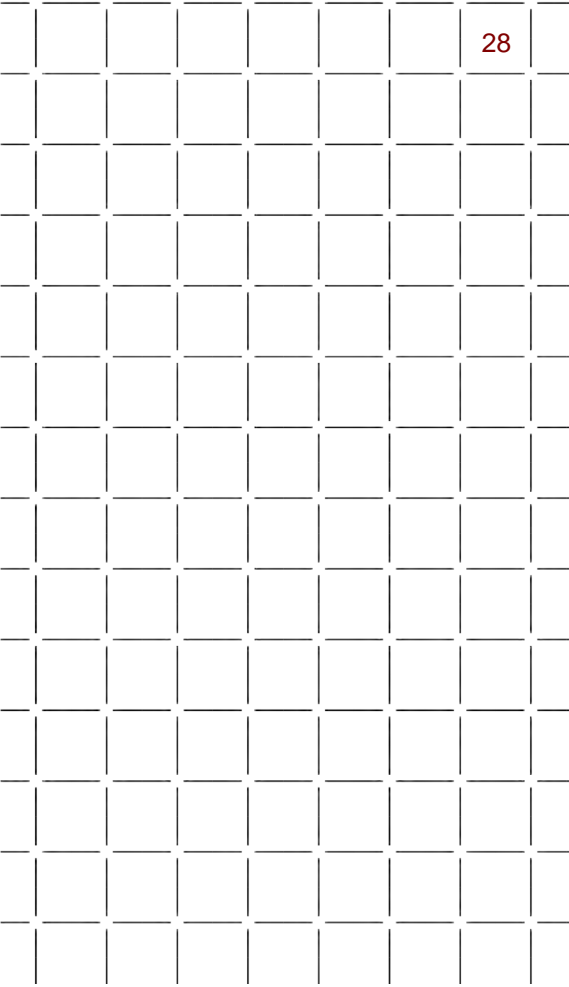








**ESTABLISH A 3<sup>RD</sup>  
PARTY EVENT  
HOSTING PROGRAM  
FOR DTH+ PARKS**













# 3<sup>RD</sup> PARTY EVENT HOSTING

- Clear, fair, predictable
- Amplify impact on public parks
- Reflect community aspirations
- Respect the public assets
- Serves as a catalyst for Downtown

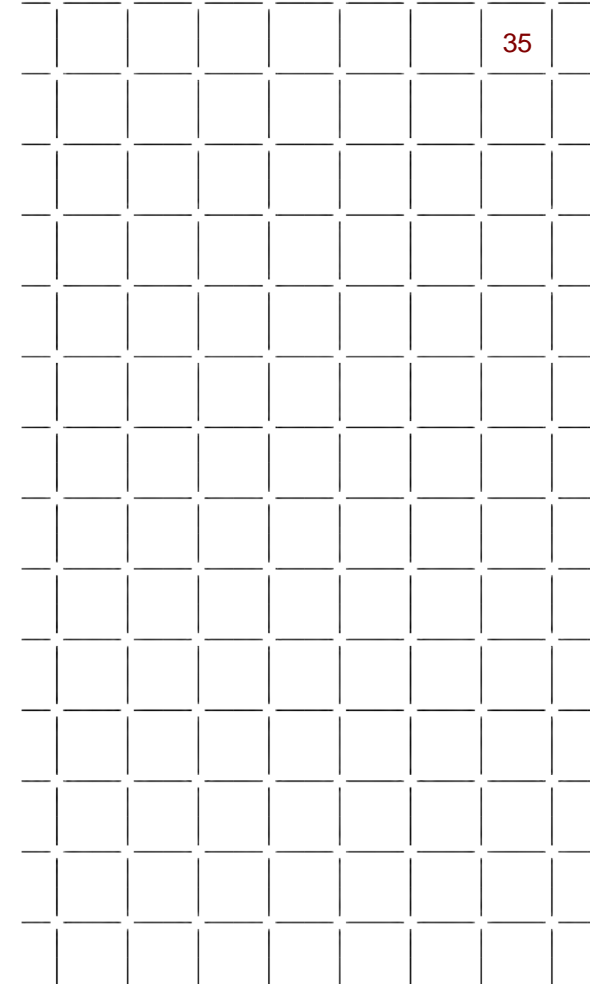
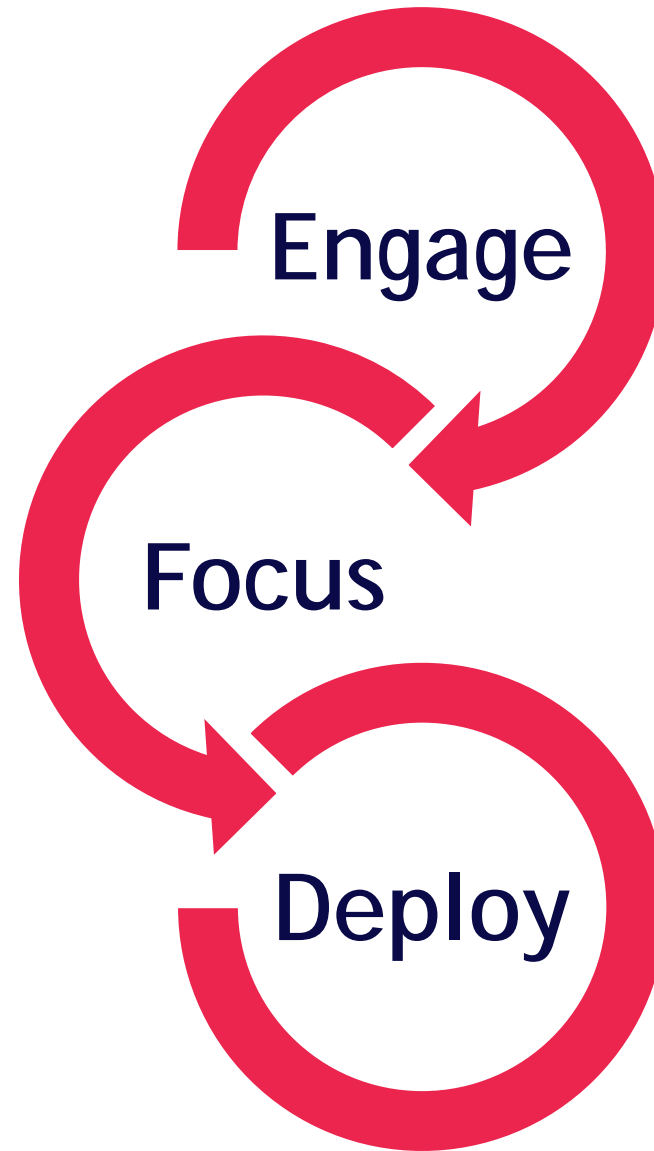


# DEVELOP SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMMING STRATEGY



# PROCESS

- Build consensus on desired outcomes
- Test, Measure, Learn
- Differentiated
- Vibrant Public Realm



**IDENTIFY & INSTALL  
DISTINCTIVE,  
STRATEGICALLY  
POSITIONED 2024  
HOLIDAY DECOR**

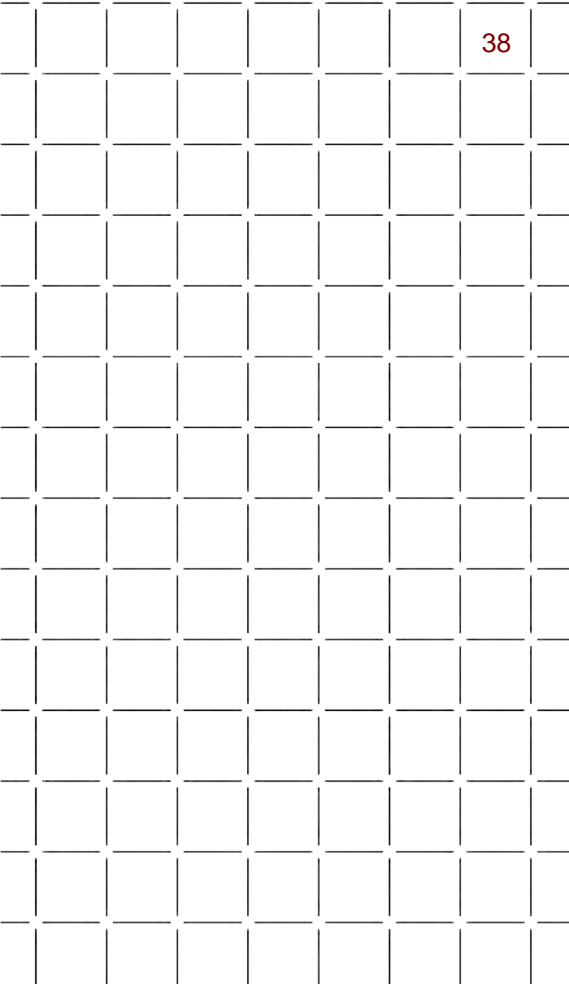


# SENSE OF PLACE

- Synergy with public realm + placemaking
- Differentiated
- Measurable *strategic* impact



# RE-ENVISION & DEPLOY NEW STREET POLE BANNERS



# ARRIVAL

- Bold Color + Simple Graphics
- I AM Downtown!
- Unique Experiences (Differentiated)



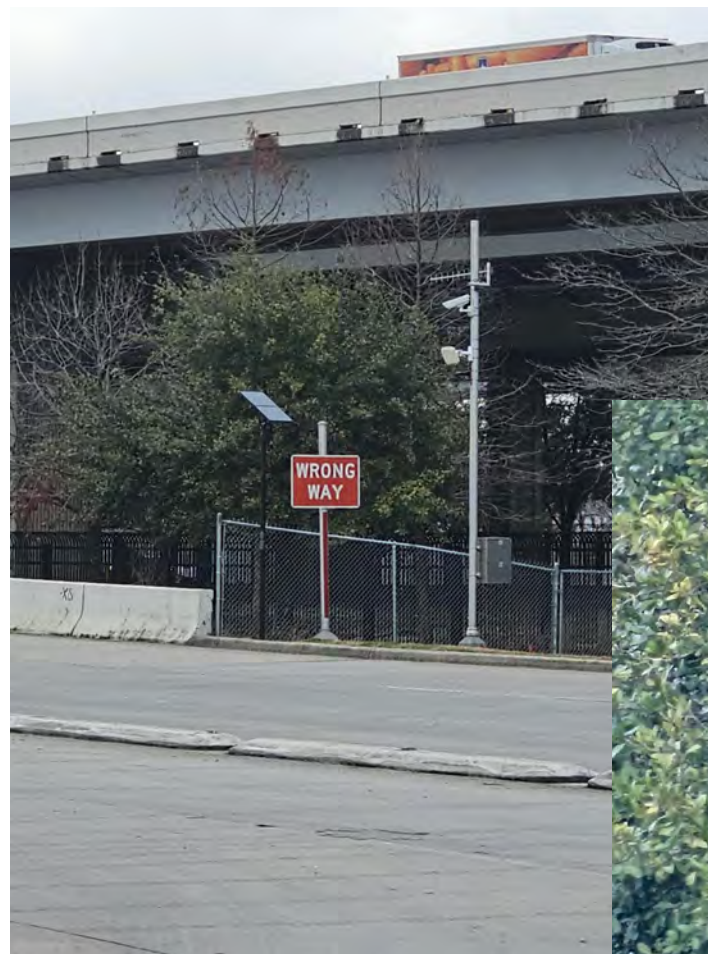
# PILOT A FLOCK CAMERA NETWORK



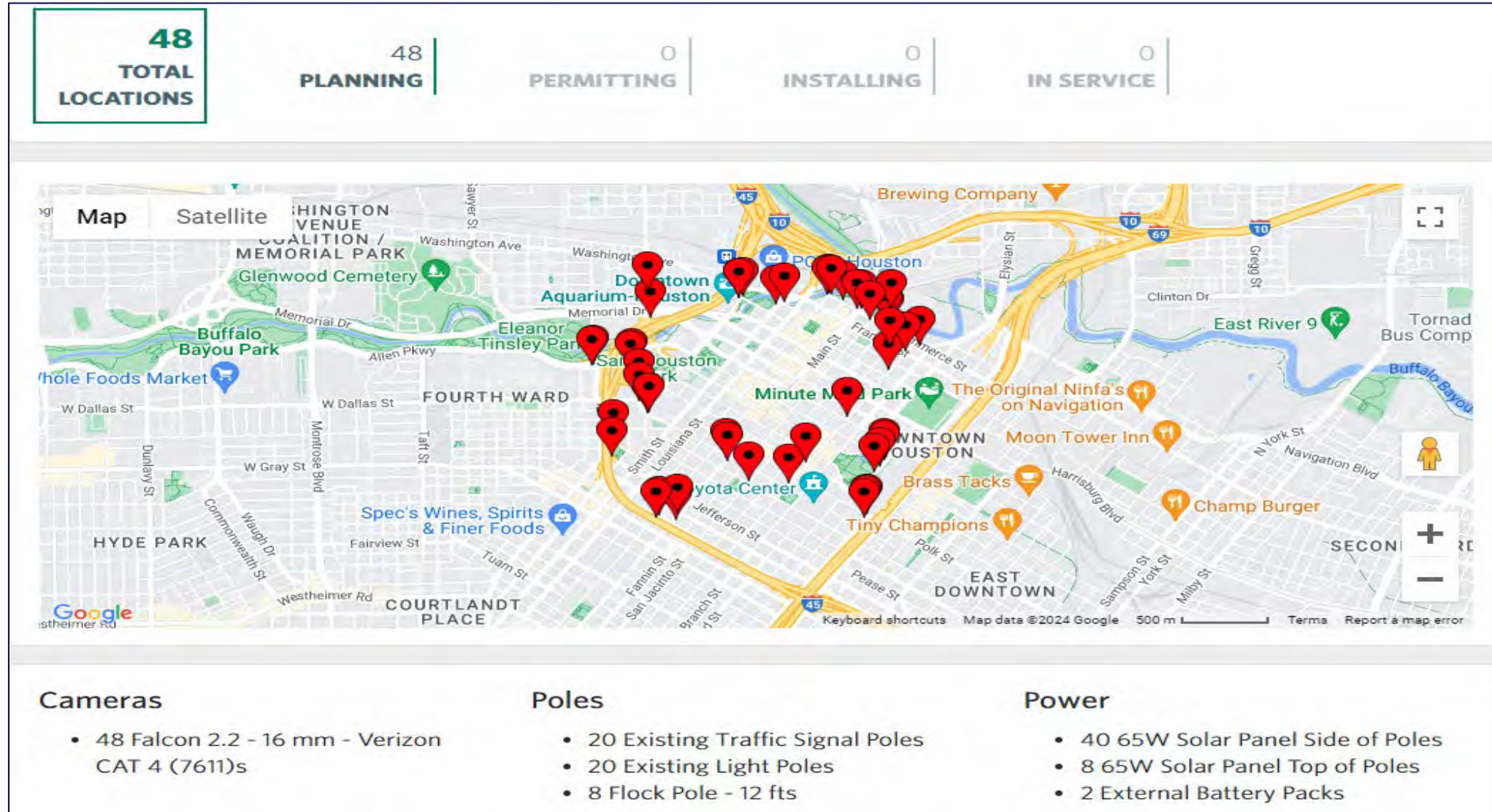


# FLOCK CAMERAS

- Camera system that provides direct support to the Houston Police Department
- Cameras deployed to specific locations that read vehicle license plates
- Captures two (2) lanes of traffic simultaneously, with ability to process up to 30,000 vehicles per day
- Part of growing network: 5,000 Flock cameras deployed around the greater Houston metropolitan area



# FLOCK CAMERA DEPLOYMENT



**FOSTER A NEW  
HOMELESS  
ENGAGEMENT-FOCUSED  
UNIT WITHIN SAFETY  
PROGRAM**

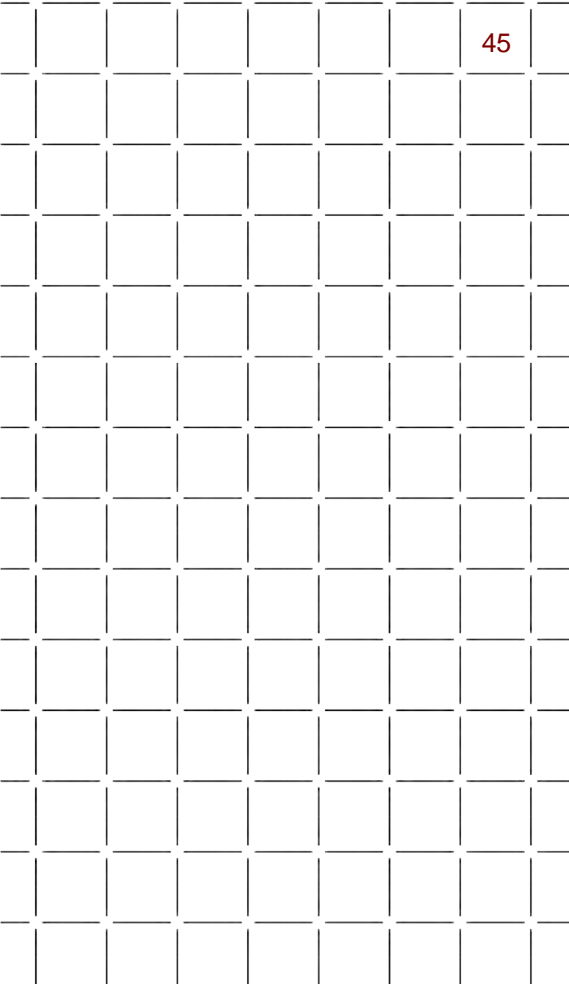


# QUALITY OF LIFE TEAM

- 6 Quality of Life Response team members
- Specially trained to deter quality-of-life issues and offer an enhanced sense of safety in Downtown
- Proactively deployed to known “hotspot areas” during peak times
- Address all nuisance, City ordinance compliance issues
- Works closely with outreach teams, providing referrals
- Analytic data collection



# **PRODUCE A STOREFRONT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY & SUPPORT PROGRAM**



# BOOST STREET-LEVEL ACTIVITY

- Despite residential population growth and the steady return of visitors to our major destinations, street-level storefronts and retail nodes struggle to shine
- This isn't a tunnels problem (entirely)
  - 3 out of 4 storefronts are not in the tunnels
  - Tunnels storefront occupancy is 72% and street-level occupancy is 82%
- What's needed: Enhance, diversify, and strategically pivot street-level storefronts and their tenants toward a mixed-use Downtown neighborhood



# STRATEGY-INFORMED GRANT PROGRAM FOR STOREFRONTS

- Develop a strategic plan in partnership with a national retail expert to consider cities and solutions that mirror Houston.
- Stand up a strategic grant program or multiple programs for street-level storefronts.
- Connect retail nodes through placemaking and connectivity efforts occurring at street level.





Downtown District

**FY 2024 RAISE**

**Planning Grant Application**

**U.S. Department of Transportation**



**Location:** Houston, Harris County, TX

**Urban/Rural:** Urban Planning Grant

**RAISE Request:** \$12,000,000

**Contact:** Luis Nunez, NHHIP Project Manager

**Phone:** (713) 248-3199

**Email:** [luis.nunez@downtownhouston.org](mailto:luis.nunez@downtownhouston.org)

**Address:** 1221 McKinney Street, Suite 4250, Houston, TX 77010

February 28, 2024



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Appendix C – Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA)	

## I. Project Description

The North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) is a Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)-led \$9.7 billion realignment and reconstruction of three highways that encircle Downtown Houston and divide adjacent neighborhoods. The Houston Downtown Management District (HDMD or Downtown District) is requesting **\$12,000,000.00** from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to complete a Planning and Design Study to determine the additional structural support necessary for TxDOT to construct a thirty-acre deck across a below-grade segment of the highway project – The EaDo Cap Connector – sufficient to bear the load of future infrastructure improvements identified by the Downtown District, adjacent communities, and key partners. A key partner in the study will be the East Downtown (EaDo) Management District and our funding request is consistent with President Biden’s Justice40 Initiative in that over 88 percent of grant and budget funds will be spent in the East Downtown Management District area (Census Tract 3101.01), which is both an Historically Disadvantaged Community and Area of Persistent Poverty.

Without this community-led planning and design effort, TxDOT can only deliver a concrete base condition, further cementing Downtown’s separation from its near neighborhoods and squandering significant community benefits. Given the concrete cap’s location in the center of Houston’s premiere sports and convention campuses, beloved urban green space, and a resurgent residential population, the City, the Downtown District and other key governmental and community partners have developed a preliminary vision of a multi-modal connector that restitches Downtown with adjacent neighborhoods. The proposed planning and design effort builds upon prior visioning work and develops a specific program for the 30-acre connective complement to TxDOT’s concrete cap.

By addressing connectivity and mobility in Downtown and adjoining neighborhoods in a sustainable and equitable manner, the EaDo Cap Connector will ensure the NHHIP’s effectiveness as a surface transportation hub. The EaDo Cap Connector Planning and Design will produce a series of outcomes that positively impact the NHHIP’s fundamental transportation challenges, in these merit areas:

- safety
- environmental sustainability
- quality of life
- mobility and community connectivity
- economic competitiveness and opportunity
- state of good repair
- partnership and collaboration, and
- innovation.

TxDOT is financially committed to constructing the EaDo Cap Connector only as a concrete deck pursuant to a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) (see Appendix C, Sec. IV, pg. 13) between TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This base condition is neither sustainable nor equitable for Downtown, the adjacent diverse neighborhoods, nor for the community goals of the NHHIP. However, as part of constructing the NHHIP, TxDOT has agreed to construct the infrastructure support required for a reimagined EaDo Cap Connector

with community-identified infrastructure improvements. Planning, design, and engineering are necessary to identify and quantify the required infrastructure improvements. Thus, the Downtown District seeks this grant to help bear the cost of that work, enabling the District to help TxDOT determine the additional structural requirements. Moreover, this grant will support community engagement to identify an equitable and sustainable vision for the EaDo Cap Connector. Respecting the framework of the VRA accord with FHWA, TxDOT will collaborate with third parties, including the Downtown District and other community-based partners, to design the NHHIP to mitigate harm to communities most heavily impacted. The stated goals of this accord, between TxDOT and the FHWA include “adding structural caps over portions of the highway system,” as a mitigation strategy. The RAISE grant funds will directly address significant surface transportation challenges by enabling a well-intended, yet insufficient surface transportation project to enhance neighborhood connectivity. The alternative would inflict further damage by disconnecting neighborhoods from Downtown.

Rendering of the EaDo Cap Connector’s concrete base condition.



The Downtown District’s Planning and Design Study for the EaDo Cap Connector will:

1. Engage the diverse and underrepresented communities proximate to the Cap
2. Define benefits achieved through a thoughtful program for the space
3. Develop an implementation strategy for the project.

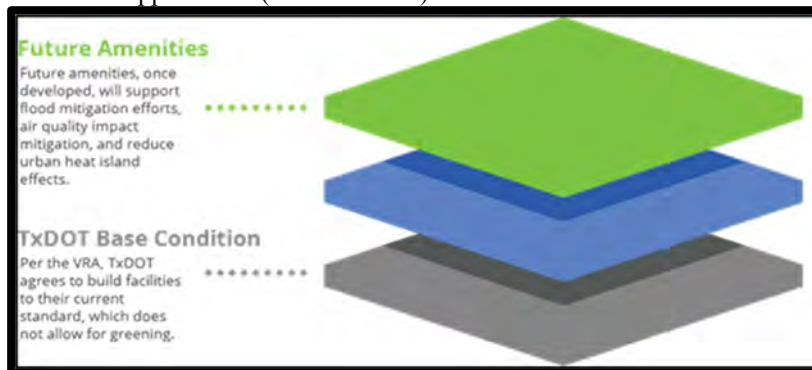
**Determining the necessary weight load on the EaDo Cap will be central to the planning study to help TxDOT ascertain the cost of additional structural support *before* construction begins in 2030. While the cost of that additional structural support will not be borne by TxDOT, this grant will fund planning, design and engineering to enable the Downtown District to establish community-identified EaDo Cap infrastructure improvements and other multimodal opportunities, and anticipate future funding needs.** This proposed planning study also aligns with the NHHIP program currently in the schematic design phase with the TxDOT Houston District Office. Downtown District is a designated participating agency to TxDOT.

The EaDo Cap Connector will be located, specifically, on the eastern edge of Downtown Houston spanning the NHHIP-designed below-grade highways (IH-45 and IH-69) and will run from the north at Commerce Street and terminate to the south at Lamar Street. The Cap project extends as far east as St. Emanuel Street.

The EaDo Cap Connector is a critical component not only for the long-term economic vitality of Downtown Houston, but also for the diverse neighborhoods abutting and adjacent to the Cap. The EaDo Cap Connector can unlock economic potential in key census tracts immediately adjacent to the NHHIP. Understanding that most of the project is in an Historically Disadvantaged Community and an Area of Persistent Poverty (Census Tract 3101.01) is critical to planning the EaDo Cap Connector, while the entire project is in a federally designated Opportunity Zone (Census Tracts 3101 and 1000). Thoughtful coordination of this diverse community with the NHHIP opportunity is critical for sustainable and equitable growth of this City and region.

The NHHIP's EaDo Cap Connector project will remove barriers of access from communities to transportation, jobs and business opportunities while reducing transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The EaDo Cap Connector is a transformative mobility, modernization, and safety project in the economically crucial core of Downtown Houston that will also enhance and directly benefit the goals of the NHHIP. The EaDo Cap Connector will significantly improve safety for people walking and biking on high-volume arterial streets, improve at-grade crossings to implement the City of Houston's Vision Zero initiative, foster economic development among abutting neighborhoods, and reconnect lower income residents and communities of color to community assets and civic services in the urban core.

EaDo Cap Connector planning will consider programming, as well as weight load calculations and additional structural support costs (shown in blue) needed to make future infrastructure and amenity investments possible.



### NHHIP Background and Project History

The NHHIP widens and reconstructs over 65 miles of I-45 North and other intersecting highways between Houston's Downtown and the North Sam Houston Tollway (Beltway 8). Many segments of the NHHIP are planned to be constructed below grade, providing TxDOT a unique opportunity to collaborate with numerous community partners, including but not limited to the Downtown District, to fund the design and construction of infrastructure and amenity improvements on top of the highway caps. A cap is a horizontal structure built on top of a controlled-access highway and is commonly used to create new space, outdoor recreational opportunities, and many other local and regional benefits, including but not limited to adjoining community connectivity. A cap can also support residential, commercial, or even institutional structures. The NHHIP creates the potential for up to 35 connector opportunities across all segments, including garden bridges and caps around the Downtown area. Together, these 35 connectors could amount to 9 miles, offsetting the NHHIP's wider concrete footprint and improving access to neighboring communities.

NHHIP Segments 1-3.



The NHHIP is a TxDOT-led realignment and widening project overseen by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that is located within the City of Houston. It has been included by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) — the region’s metropolitan planning organization — in the [Regional Transportation Plan](#) since 2005. The NHHIP is perhaps the largest infrastructure project the City of Houston will see in a generation, encompassing the widening of multiple highways, the accommodation of METRO dedicated bus rapid transit lanes, addition of multiple pedestrian / bicycle bridges over the highway system, and the expansion of the trails network.

The project has three major segments. Segment 3, where the NHHIP will begin, is currently funded and in design, Segment 2 is partially funded, and Segment 1 is awaiting funding. Construction on Segment 3 (3B1) is anticipated to begin in March 2024 with a drainage component under St. Emanuel Street. The Downtown District is an official participating agency with TxDOT while staff serve as technical experts on the NHHIP’s vision, goals, planning processes, and design requirements.

## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

On December 19, 2022, the City of Houston signed an MOU with TxDOT regarding the NHHIP. The City’s MOU focused on six key areas: Housing and Community Cohesion, Drainage and Flood Mitigation, Reducing the NHHIP Footprint During Detailed Design, Transit and Max Lanes, Connectivity, and Park Space and Urban Design.

## Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA)

A VRA was signed by FHWA and TxDOT on March 6, 2023, to resolve the FHWA investigation of TxDOT regarding the NHHIP under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) by setting forth specific mitigation actions for the project, with specific focus on: reducing the NHHIP footprint, minimizing displacements, mitigating for flooding, mitigating for air quality impacts, **adding structural caps over portions of the highway system**, expanding opportunities for parks/open space/trails/pedestrian and bicycle facilities, ensuring safe access to the city during construction, and ensuring meaningful access for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

## Previously Completed Planning Components

### Plan Downtown and the Green Loop

Although there are no previously completed physical components of the NHHIP, the EaDo Cap Connector’s vision originated through *Plan Downtown* in 2017. Plan Downtown is the product of an 18-month planning process led by the Downtown District and its many partners, including the City of Houston and Harris County. The public engagement and planning process led to the vision for a “Green Loop” that would encircle and enhance the Downtown area, permitting multi-modal access and bringing the gray loop of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century TxDOT highways into a new era with the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the NHHIP. The community’s vision was to create a 5-mile “green loop” as an enhancement and opportunity brought about by the NHHIP highway replacement, improvement and realignment. **The EaDo Cap Connector is the economic and cultural engine of the “green loop” undertaking and, as discussed further, implicates all eight merit criteria central to this RAISE grant.**

The Downtown Plan gave rise to the concept of a Green Loop around Downtown Houston.



### Civic Opportunities Master Plan

Plan Downtown gave rise to a new need: to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, partners, and the public to develop even more visionary plans for all future NHHIP infrastructure

amenities in and around the Downtown core, especially for all potential connectivity and amenity opportunities. The master planning process recognized that the separate NHHIP connectivity projects, contemplated by the community – garden and signature bridges, caps, green spaces, detention areas -- were “Civic Opportunities.” The EaDo Cap Connector location represents the most economically, socially and culturally impactful of these opportunities and is critical to the implementation of the Green Loop vision.

### Transportation Challenges Addressed and Design Solutions

Since 1987, more than 20 North American cities have chosen to remove urban highway segments from downtown cores, neighborhoods, and waterfronts to promote safety, racial equity and inclusion, and economic competitiveness. One of the key transportation challenges that Downtown Houston experiences is the current highway layout encircling Downtown and physically dividing its neighboring communities. Removing Houston’s highway network is not possible, so the EaDo Cap Connector is one of many infrastructure and civic opportunities to reconnect communities made possible by the NHHIP design placing the highway bed below-grade on the eastern edge of Downtown.

The Downtown District is committed to ensuring transportation projects serve to advance equity, safety, and resilience. The NHHIP can be the epitome of this unique transportation planning approach to solve Houston’s greatest transportation challenges. What was originally a roadway project to speed drivers in and out of Downtown Houston can become a multimodal project that addresses connectivity for all modes of transportation, and simultaneously addresses flooding, housing, safety, economic development, and inclusivity for all neighborhoods and residents along the corridor.

### Existing Conditions and Potential Benefits



Texas Ave. at Chartres St. (facing east)

Today’s existing highway footprint and its elevated section on the eastern edge of Downtown separates the burgeoning life of Downtown from its resurgent, diverse neighbors and strangles economic growth and opportunity. Moreover, it also spawns unsafe conditions. For instance, Texas Avenue is a key intersection in which the highway overpass creates critical safety concerns: the highway above, pedestrians and bicyclists below, vehicles at-grade, and the Metro light rail infrastructure throughout.

Nevertheless, this crossroads holds enormous potential. Along Texas, only two blocks to the east, Shell Energy Stadium has a capacity of 18,000 people (about the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden). Along the same street and only one block west of the future EaDo Cap Connector area, Minute Maid Park has a capacity of 41,000 people. Combined, these two venues attract over 3.6 million people a year, many passing through this intersection. Its existing condition is unsafe for pedestrians and vehicles alike, whether visiting or familiar with the surroundings. Pedestrians must share a dark underpass with the highway pillars and electrical control boxes in the middle of the sidewalk.



McKinney at Chartres St. (facing west)

Directly adjacent to I-69, Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center attracted almost 1.8 million visitors in 2023 alone. The current convention center layout presents another physical barrier, but future redevelopment will create additional points of entry to the east, welcoming guests locally and regionally. Today, vehicles and people travelling west on Lamar, McKinney, Walker, and Rusk Streets all intersect with the underpass parking, with only the option of turning right. The NHHIP project and EaDo Cap Connector can transform this interface, benefiting the local diverse community and Downtown, while also serving as a boon for regional, national, and international convention visitors.

### **Complete Street Vision**

Planning for the EaDo Cap Connector will allow for future improvements to the many connections located along and adjacent to the Cap's location. The vision is to intervene with a combination of complete streets and universal design approaches that can optimize the future NHHIP reconstruction and reconfiguration through the eastern edge of Downtown as a multimodal corridor and hub. Designing the EaDo Cap Connector to support additional weight will ensure that its strategic positioning remains well connected to key transportation, transit, trail, and rail infrastructure. The future EaDo Cap Connector will strengthen these modal connections and leverage additional local, state and federally funded network investments that are planned or currently under construction.

The RAISE grant funds will be used for a planning, design, and engineering study that considers the additional structural support needed for the EaDo Cap Connector to accommodate anticipated connectivity-related infrastructure components. The planning and design process will be phased through 30-60-90 percent design plans, specifications, and cost estimates that will consider the weight load required for TxDOT to construct the EaDo Cap Connector to a standard that will accommodate wider sidewalks and ADA compliance, active transportation opportunities, the



planned reconstruction of major roadways and rail utilizing the cap itself, signals, street lighting, stormwater, water, sewer, utility, and other infrastructure investments.

Detailed design for proposed highway cap and cross-street rights-of-way improvements will be developed based on the project brief and scope established during the Master Planning process. Criteria for design will be based on project priorities, programming, and performative criteria established in the master plan and in alignment with the technical parameters coordinated with TxDOT and City planning and engineering departments. The detailed design and engineering for this project will be developed in association with ongoing community outreach to ensure project transparency and alignment with the established community vision

The EaDo Cap Connector project will plan, design, and engineer key intersection improvements over the Connector, addressing current standards for accommodating multimodal transport, such as rail, walking and biking, plus those needed to better protect the community during storm events. The design concepts will integrate widened sidewalks and protected bike lanes that will traverse the EaDo Cap Connector. The planning and design study will address the following key intersections and future road reconstruction connections along the EaDo Cap Connector:

Commerce Street	Capitol Street
Franklin Street	Rusk Street
Congress Street	Walker Street
Preston Street	McKinney Street
Texas Avenue	Lamar Street

## II. Project Location

The proposed EaDo Cap Connector is located in a Census-designated urban area. According to the 2020 Census, Houston has a population of roughly 5.8 million. The Houston Metro region is one of the fastest growing population centers in the United States. The majority of the proposed EaDo Cap Connector is in Census Tract 3101, which is in an Area of Persistent Poverty within the EaDo neighborhood location. The majority of the future EaDo Cap Connector project is located within an Historically Disadvantaged Community (Census Tract 3101). As testament to the area's diversity, according to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate, roughly 30 percent of the population in Census Tract 3101.01 speak another language other than English. The poverty rate in Census Tract 3101.01 is roughly 20 percent, which is above the poverty rate of Harris County at roughly 16 percent.

### **East Downtown (EaDo) Neighborhood (Disadvantaged and APP)**

The area directly east of Downtown Houston and separated from the urban core by IH-69, comprising roughly 1.21 square miles or 778 acres, is a diverse neighborhood comprised of residential, retail, and industrial pockets of development, colloquially referred to in Houston as "EaDo." EaDo is a vibrant neighborhood rich with history, interesting sites, thriving businesses and entertainment. and is the future location of the NHHIP's EaDo Cap Connector. EaDo is remarkably situated near Houston's largest employment centers: Downtown, the Texas Medical Center, and the Houston Ship Channel. With unmatched views of the growth area of the downtown skyline, East Downtown is also within walking distance of Discovery Green Park, Minute Maid Park (Astros), the George R. Brown Convention Center, the Toyota Center

(Rockets), and Shell Stadium (Dynamo and Dash). The EaDo area provides great neighborhood amenities, including access to METRO Transit and METRO light rail from the East End and Southeast corridors connecting to Downtown and the Main Street Red Line.

The new NHHIP realignment moves the new right-of-way to the east of the existing footprint. The EaDo Cap Connector location shows the new realignment and future right-of-way footprint (yellow).



## Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of Funds

The Downtown District seeks \$12,000,000.00 in RAISE planning funds to determine the structural cost delta needed for TxDOT to build the additional support of the future construction project. The RAISE planning grant will fund planning and design activities (i.e., 30-60-90) so the Downtown District and partners are better positioned to pursue future construction grant funding for the additional structural support system.

Currently, Segment 3D of the NHHIP project – where the EaDo Cap Connector is situated -- is fully funded with a combination of Federal and State dollars. The H-GAC Transportation Improvement Plan (2023-2026), detailing the funding for all highway projects, includes the NHHIP's EaDo Cap Connector concrete cap baseline. The TxDOT Houston District Office supports the Downtown District's effort to fund the planning study to adequately address their construction of the additional structural system needed to support future weight loads on the cap. Despite most of the EaDo Cap Connector project location falling in both an historically disadvantaged community and an area of persistent poverty, the Downtown District's funding commitment is to provide a 20 percent match at **\$3,000,000.00**. Any potential cost overruns for the planning and design effort will be covered by the Downtown District. All cost estimates for the project were developed by the Downtown District staff in coordination with its public and private partners (for more details, please see Appendix B).

## BUDGET:

	<b>EaDo Cap Connector Planning &amp; Design (30-60-90) Study</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Funding Amount</b>	
RAISE Funds (80%):	\$12,000,000.00	\$12,000,000.00
Other Federal Funds:		
Non-Federal Funds (20%):	\$3,000,000.00	\$3,000,000.00
<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	<b>\$15,000,000.00</b>	<b>\$15,000,000.00</b>

Table 2a:

<b>2020 Census Tract(s)</b>	<b>Project Costs per Census Tract</b>
3101	\$13,305,000.00 (88.7%)
1000	\$1,695,000.00 (11.3%)

Table 2b:

<b>2010 Census Tract(s)</b>	<b>Project Costs per Census Tract</b>
3101	\$13,305,000.00 (88.7%)
1000	\$1,695,000.00 (11.3%)

Table 2c:

<b>Urban/Rural</b>	<b>Project Costs</b>
Urban (2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$15,000,000.00 (100%)

The Downtown District, with TxDOT and the City of Houston, are eager to start this critical planning and design work. All necessary activities will be complete to allow RAISE grant funds to be obligated sufficiently in advance of the statutory deadline of September 30, 2028. Once the RAISE grants are obligated, the Downtown District will begin expending RAISE funds to deliver the project in alignment with the grant agreement. All activities in the grant agreement will be complete and funds expended no later than September 30, 2033 – and are expected to be completed in advance of that date.

### III. Merit Criteria

#### Criterion No. 1: Safety

##### **Protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks**

As a primary benefit of this project, safe non-motorized access and use will exist where it did not before. Using the EaDo Cap Connector as an opportunity to replace the existing substandard crossings will make access safer and use more extensive as the Cap will reconnect the communities on either side of the highway. This reconnection provides safe community access – near and far -- to work, live, and play--including safer access to Houston’s extensive park and trail system, at Eleanor Tinsley Park, Buffalo Bayou Park, and the Buffalo Bayou trails system. Safety considerations are critical to one of Houston’s signature efforts, the “Walkable Places” initiative, which consists of the following design principles that will be incorporated into the design of the EaDo Cap: be sensitive to local context, ensure walkable urban form along proposed streets, promote safe multi-modal transportation, create a pleasant experience, and obtain local support. The planning and design study will create safer connections to designated

Walkable Places streets. In addition, the project location directly complements several proximate Transit-Oriented Developments, whose street- and site-level design standards will work hand-in-glove with the Cap design process to focus on pedestrian safety, softscapes, and trees to create an inviting and accessible pedestrian realm.

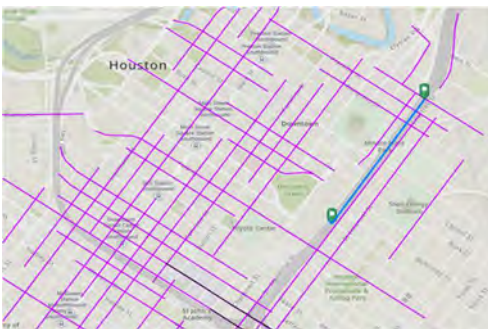
### **Reduce fatalities and/or serious injuries in underserved communities**

The design for the EaDo Cap Connector will be linked to several key City of Houston program indicators critical to enhancing pedestrian safety. Houston is committed to ending traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030; the number of traffic deaths and serious injuries declined year-over-year in 2022 for the first time since the start of the Vision Zero program. Houston's design interventions work, but much improvement is still needed in Downtown. The funding proposed in this grant will allow for the future construction of fully protected bike lanes and sidewalks on the EaDo Cap Connector. In addition, the highway and connecting streets are being designed by the City in close coordination with TxDOT in a way that safely accommodates future truck and freight access. This will allow for greater economic development opportunities in affected neighborhoods while still prioritizing pedestrian safety and mobility. Pedestrians and bicyclists are the most vulnerable users of our transportation systems and facilities.

One of the top goals for the planning and design study for the EaDo Cap Connector is to protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks by specifically evaluating the EaDo Cap Connector's potential to increase safety as a primary consideration. The future EaDo Cap Connector intersects with the City's High Injury Network: the 6 percent of City streets where 60 percent of serious injuries occur. In addition, the highway and connecting streets are being designed to safely accommodate future truck and freight access. This not only enhances safety but will allow for greater economic development opportunities in affected neighborhoods while still prioritizing pedestrian safety and mobility.

From 2017-2021, the average U.S. County experienced 61 roadway fatalities. Harris County's roadway fatalities were over 38 times higher than the national average. Within Harris County, the highest number of fatalities occur Downtown. Most recently, a woman was hit and killed by a truck while in a crosswalk in January 2024. Additionally, in October 2023, a person was hit and killed by a METRO light rail train near the future EaDo Cap Connector location. The deaths highlight need for elevated safety levels, especially around active pedestrian nodes. Safety was identified as one of the top priorities in Houston's Vision Zero planning document. The organizing principle behind Vision Zero is that a single death is a tragedy. Proactively planning for the integration of safety interventions into the EaDo Cap Connector along with other multimodal improvements could be a great benefit to Downtown Houston's many patrons.

Houston's High Injury Network (HIN). Purple lines show high levels of injuries and deaths in Downtown at the EaDo Cap Connector.



### **Incorporate specific safety improvements that will further document a risk reduction**

Studies on roadway safety clearly show that deaths caused by road traffic are structural and, therefore, can be avoided by implementing the right mix of safety precautions, especially through creative design solutions like those that will be incorporated into the EaDo Cap Connector. The Connector will create a new space around Downtown Houston's eastern edge and allow multi-modal access while maintaining traffic flows at safer speeds. By creating a separated and designated space for walking and biking without requiring pedestrians and cyclists to share the road with vehicles, the planning study will provide the opportunity to reduce the risks of bicycle and pedestrian crashes along the project location through design. The EaDo Cap planning will further incorporate pedestrian safety by designing improved visibility in crosswalks, and mitigating roadway speed through design best practices. Regarding safety in public transit, the EaDo Cap Connector will not only carry the east and west trunk lines for segments of Houston's METRO light rail, but the Cap's proximity to rail and bus stations enables planning and design to focus on enhancing safety of the City's workforce who use public transportation by designing improved linkages and new transit features. The EaDo Cap planning study will incorporate safety-related design and placemaking interventions for the connector as a means of reducing vehicular-related fatalities and injuries in the vulnerable and underserved communities adjacent to the EaDo Cap Connector project.

### **Criterion No. 2: Environmental Sustainability**

#### **Reduce transportation-related air pollution and GHGs in disadvantaged communities**

When complete, the EaDo Cap Connector will be a once in a generation opportunity to positively impact environmental sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving environmental resiliency, and encouraging a modal shift, including micromobility. The EaDo Cap Connector, as the centerpiece of the Green Loop concept around Houston's Downtown, is possible only by virtue of the implementation of the NHHIP. The planning of the EaDo Cap Connector combined with the broader Green Loop vision will mitigate potential impacts to the natural environment, including stormwater and urban habitats, not only for Downtown Houston, but will positively impact the sustainability of adjacent, diverse neighborhoods. The planning study will consider the role of the EaDo Cap Connector in controlling and mitigating adverse environmental impacts, including such considerations as protecting water quality and at-risk stormwater facilities both during construction and in final build.

#### **Align with the state and national decarbonization strategies**

The EaDo Cap Connector will directly address sustainability issues by connecting two neighborhoods in a way that reduces commute burdens and improves walkability, bikeability, and overall quality of life. The Cap will also improve efficiency of all vehicles by reducing supply chain bottlenecks and creating opportunities for alternative means of travel. Additionally, the potential for programming tree plantings and other green areas will help manage stormwater runoff more cost-effectively and sequester carbon to reduce air pollution. The EaDo Cap Connector aligns with the Texas Carbon Reduction Strategy objectives to:

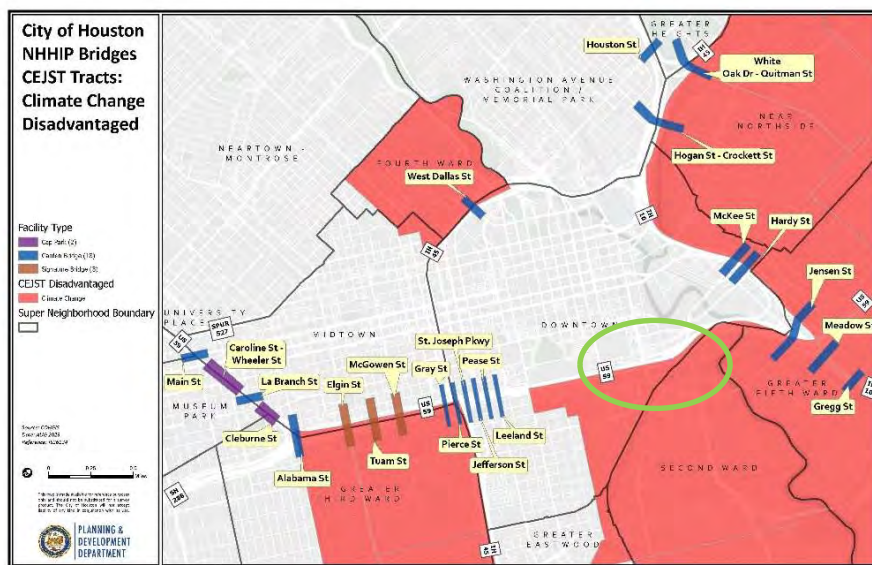
- employ advanced technologies to improve traffic flow;
- reduce congestion to improve operational efficiency of the transportation system;
- support the access, availability, and safety of bicycling and walking; and

- support the use of transit, constructing, and maintaining infrastructure using carbon reducing practices, materials, and technologies, and more.

### Improve the resilience of at-risk infrastructure

The Downtown District will ensure that each of the plans the City of Houston has created and is in the process of implementing (Plan Houston, Resilient Houston, Houston Climate Action Plan, and Complete Communities) prioritizes adaptation to climate change as a fundamental goal of the future construction of the NHHIP's EaDo Cap Connector. The planning and design study will help Houston realize its vision of a connected, resilient, adaptable city by making it possible for construction of future infrastructure to address environmental sustainability, safety, shade, and connectivity.

The NHHIP's EaDo Cap Connector location is vulnerable to climate change.



The EaDo Cap planning study will program for climate mitigation elements, such as shade structures, drinking fountains, landscaping, and benches. Such planning reflects a growing concern in Texas and at TxDOT to assume responsible stewardship for mitigating the adverse impact of extreme weather changes in the environment. A recent study from the Office of the Texas State Climatologist at Texas A&M found that Texas should expect warmer weather with a higher frequency of extreme heat, an increased risk of wildfires, and more urban flooding. These conditions can be a significant deterrent for people who might choose to walk or bike. Moreover, these effects will disproportionately impact underserved, overburdened, and disadvantaged communities, located in areas with less shade coverage, more pavement surface area, and fewer parks and open spaces for respite. These are the very communities adjacent to the EaDo Cap Connector, and for whom the Connector will directly benefit.

### Reduce VMTs specifically to modal shift to transit, rail, or active transportation

The design of the EaDo Cap Connector will enhance and improve the attractiveness and accessibility of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to help improve air quality and reduce air pollution emissions on local roadways by shifting trips taken by motor vehicles to non-motorized modes. Numerous zero-emission transportation options can utilize the EaDo Cap Connector and its future connection to the greater connectivity network, including walking, bicycling, scooters,

and other electric and manual personal transportation vehicles. This modal shift is expected to reduce emissions, providing a more viable, emission-free, low-cost travel option to residents and visitors. Preliminary studies by the Downtown District estimate a VMT reduction diversion at the EaDo Cap Connector of auto trips between 0.5-2 miles in length of up to 50 percent.

### **Implement transportation-efficient land use and design**

The Downtown District and TxDOT are committed to implementing transportation-efficient land use and design around the EaDo Cap Connector to create a mix of land uses, compact development patterns, and understand the potential for accessible green space and neighborhood centers that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips. The community attributes of the EaDo Cap Connector will enhance an effort, led by the Downtown District during NHHIP design and construction, to stand up several programs proximate to the Cap Connector that will encourage higher residential densities, through multifamily residential mixed-use developments and TODs. The planning and design study will, further, explore the community's appetite for placing residential developments on surplus TxDOT right-of-way adjacent to the EaDo Cap Connector.

### **Reduce emissions specifically by shifting freight to lower-carbon travel modes**

Planning and design of the EaDo Cap Connector will complement and enhance Houston's strategy to reduce emissions by creating fewer automobile dependent developments, to create walkable neighborhoods around existing and planned transit. Per the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), communities that invest in public transit reduce the nation's carbon emissions by 63 million metric tons annually. The planning and design study will encompass transit-ready transportation infrastructure and TODs, as a complement to the NHHIP's construction. Both by location and by design the EaDo Cap Connector will provide easier pedestrian connectivity to mass transit.

Within a quarter mile and beyond of our location, alternative modes of transportation are vital to those who live, work, and play in the Downtown area or students attending the University of Houston Downtown and the South Texas College of Law. APTA recorded that, nationally, of all the public transit riders, 71 percent are employed, and 7 percent are students, aligning with the demographics and context of our Downtown.

The NHHIP civic opportunities in Downtown will link existing and proposed bikeways and improve the walk to transit across the freeways. The table below shows the ways all future NHHIP improvements will strengthen access to lower-carbon travel options. The centerpiece of this effort, and one of the most impactful, will be the EaDo Cap Connector.

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Connects to Bike Paths (Y/N/Proposed)</b>	<b>Connects to METRO Bus Stop (2-block radius)</b>
<b>EaDo Cap Connector</b>	<b>Y and New Connections Proposed</b>	<b>Y and New Connections Proposed</b>
Alabama St.	Proposed	N
Caroline St. – Wheeler Ave.	<b>Proposed</b>	N
Cleburne St.	Y	N
Elgin St.	N	Y
Gray St.	Y	N
Gregg St.	<b>Proposed</b>	Y
Hardy St.	Y	N
Hogan St. -Crockett St.	<b>Proposed</b>	N
Houston St.	Y	N
Jefferson St.	N	N

Facility	Connects to Bike Paths (Y/N/Proposed)	Connects to METRO Bus Stop (2-block radius)
Jensen St.	Proposed	N
La Branch St.	Y	Y
Leeland St.	Proposed	N
Main St.	Proposed	Y
McGowen St.	Proposed	Y
McKee St.	Proposed	N
Meadow St.	N	Y
Pease St.	N	N
Pierce St.	Proposed	Y
St. Joseph Pkwy.	N	Y
Tuam St.	Proposed	Y
W. Dallas St.	Proposed	Y
White Oak St. – Quitman St.	Proposed	N

The NHHIP provides an opportunity for improvement to our region’s air quality. Currently posted speed on I-45/I-69 is 60 MPH, although according to TxDOT it is estimated that with a no-build scenario, the average speed will be 27 MPH northbound and 16 MPH southbound by 2042. In contrast, with the implementation of the proposed improvements, traffic would have an average speed of 60 MPH northbound and 56 MPH southbound in the same year. This improvement in traffic flow would translate into reducing congestion and vehicle emissions.

#### **Incorporate nature-based solutions or natural infrastructure with the use of native plants**

A primary objective of the NHHIP and the EaDo Cap Connector is to construct a resilient highway system that functions during extreme weather events. Each of the NHHIP improvements plays a part in connecting the greenspaces and bayou trails that function as a support to the City’s stormwater management system. The EaDo Cap Connector will, by design, contribute to stormwater management and flood mitigation through landscape design interventions like bioswales and storm water diversion strategies. The planning study will detail specific natural infrastructure interventions and incorporate native plants to further improve stormwater management directly in the project area and specifically to the neighborhoods impacted by stormwater runoff.

#### **Referenced in a Resilience Improvement Plan or similar plan**

The City of Houston’s Resilience Plan specifically states that the City will work with stakeholders to ensure that the proposed NHHIP increases the resilience of Houstonians, adjacent neighborhoods and the City rather than contributing to or exacerbating existing and historic stresses. The City will also work with regional partners to advance a process for incorporating community priorities and concerns into ongoing and future regional mobility projects to ensure that they are designed with positive impacts for communities, the City, and the region. The Downtown District will align the EaDo Cap Connector planning and study to the City’s Resilience Plan and to TxDOT Statewide Resiliency Plan.

#### **Avoid adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species, and address the disproportionately negative environmental impacts**

As part of the NHHIP, TxDOT will implement storm water best management practices and spill prevention measures to minimize potential impacts to groundwater quality. Additionally, they conducted a quantitative mobile source air toxins (MSAT) analysis, which calculated a reduction of over 72 percent for both the build and no build scenarios for total MSAT emissions from 2018 to 2040, even as vehicle miles traveled is projected to increase between 45-58 percent.



TxDOT will coordinate with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding permit authorization for unavoidable discharges of 25 dredged or fill material into jurisdictional waters of the United States regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. TxDOT will also coordinate with the USCG per the requirements of Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and the General Bridge Act 28 regarding bridge permit authorization for the construction of bridge structures over the navigable waters of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou near the EaDo Cap Connector.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation website lists five species as potentially occurring within the proposed project area. The three listed bird species were removed from consideration in this review because the proposed project is not related to wind energy generation. The Texas prairie dawn-flower and West Indian manatee would not be impacted because of an absence of suitable habitat. Therefore, no effects to any federally listed species are anticipated from the proposed project. Traffic noise impacts were identified in each NHHIP segment for various noise-sensitive land uses, including exterior areas of single-family homes, apartments, churches, schools, and parks. Noise barriers have been proposed for 76 locations, 57 of which are proposed in Segment 3 of the NHHIP project to mitigate noise impacts, including at the EaDo Cap Connector location.

### Criterion No. 3: Quality of Life

#### **Increase affordable transportation choices by improving active transportation usage**

The EaDo Cap Connector will reconnect EaDo and Downtown. An analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data shows that the three Census Tracts located closest to the Project along the east side of I-69 have approximately 20 percent of their population living below the poverty line. The EaDo Cap Connector will both connect these nearby residents to enhanced economic opportunity Downtown and enable multi-modal accessibility through walking, biking, rail, bus, and other means where the use of a vehicle is merely secondary. The EaDo Cap Connector could also provide an additional public gathering space as well as access to Downtown parks and greenspaces nearby, such as Discovery Green, Market Square, and Trebly Park. Moreover, non-motorized accessibility for nearby residents to civic, cultural, and sporting assets Downtown will be enhanced, as a result of the EaDo Cap Connector, generating greater opportunity for community members to attend a sporting or cultural event, or avail themselves of Downtown's civic assets such as the Houston Public Library, City Hall, the Harris County Clerk's Office, and the Civil Courthouse.

#### **Improve access to daily destinations**

As a future hub of connectivity, the EaDo Cap Connector will improve access to daily destinations for all Houstonians, including to art, live performances, and other cultural activities. A sense of place can have a cultural and economic impact, attracting thousands of visitors. Downtown alone has over 140,000 employees and is home to nine Fortune 500 companies. It also boasts over 16,000 students between four schools, 12 religious institutions, and over 20 parks and greenspaces. The EaDo Cap Connector will eliminate physical barriers currently in place that limit access to Houston's core daily destinations Downtown by eliminating traffic congestion and facilitating the use of additional modes of transportation and access.

**Reduce transportation and housing cost burdens, coordinate & integrate land use, affordable housing, and transportation planning to create more livable communities and expand travel choices, and implement transit-oriented development that benefits existing residents in disadvantaged communities**

The planning and design of the EaDo Cap Connector will account for and encourage improved land-use decisions by providing the opportunity for close-in multi-family development proximate to public transportation, jobs, schools and retail by creating a connector and a destination that offers public amenities shaped by community needs and input. In step with that effort, a new housing initiative led by the Downtown District, the Downtown Living Initiative 2.0, will include an affordable housing component and will incentivize developers to incorporate a mixed-use approach to residential housing, that will include retail and other uses. The EaDo Cap Connector will also directly benefit housing projects initiated because of the NHHIP, as the Connector will provide a public amenity for residents, a destination for nearby families, and an opportunity to experience the City within walking distance of home.

The EaDo Cap Connector is envisioned as a hub for multimodal activities, including a potential trailhead for bike and pedestrian users. Currently, the highway and street crossings through TxDOT right of way present safety hazards for multimodal uses. The EaDo Cap Connector will increase the provision of safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices by significantly improving connectivity and accessibility throughout the area. The Cap project will improve street crossings for pedestrians and increase access to existing transit and improve access to major employers in the immediate vicinity and region. The EaDo Cap Connector walkability, connectivity, and transit-access improvements will help protect the health and safety of diverse and underserved communities in the area both abutting and proximate to the EaDo Cap Connector. The City of Houston and the Downtown District will work with TxDOT and METRO to best align with the 2019 voter approved METRONext Plan and determine stops and other infrastructure improvements that can optimize service to the surrounding community.

**Improve public health by promoting active transportation**

The temperatures in Houston can reach record highs during the summer months, making it difficult and even unsafe for pedestrians to be exposed to the heat for long periods. By creating green spaces, higher foot traffic is encouraged as the distances are shaded and circulation spaces are combined with spaces of rest or leisure. A 2022 study from the Urban Land Institute states that parks can improve health in several aspects, including:

- 1) Physical - reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.
- 2) Mental - reducing stress levels and improving mood.
- 3) Social - there is an association between parks and social belonging where users experience a greater community attachment.
- 4) Environmental - enhanced air quality and lower temperatures.

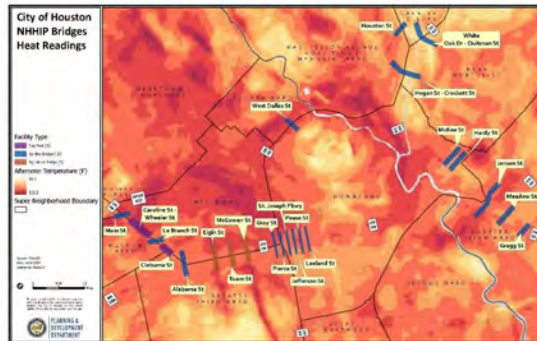
Thoughtful design with better access for pedestrians and the addition of potential green additions could provide a more comfortable environment at the EaDo Cap Connector.

**Mitigate urban heat islands to protect the health of at-risk residents, outdoor workers, etc.**

Planning, designing and engineering the EaDo Cap Connector permits the District to account for the urban canopy necessary to enable residents to traverse above the widened footprint of the highway and to enable visitors and residents alike to use and gather on the Cap Connector in

relative comfort. "Urban heat islands" occur when cities replace natural land cover with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain heat. Houston has been experiencing record-breaking high temperatures due to both climate change and the urban heat island effect, averaging temperatures that surpass 100 degrees every day. Currently, community members are forced to traverse expanses as far as 1,900 feet to cross the highway in these temperatures without shade. Roughly 200,000 Houstonians use public transportation each day, but many transit stops lack adequate shelter and shade.

As early as Spring, afternoon temperatures at the EaDo Cap hover around 100 degrees Fahrenheit.



One of the primary ways to mitigate the heat island effect is through vegetation. While tree canopy density is directly linked to lower experienced temperatures, only 18 percent of Houston is currently covered by tree canopy. The lack of tree canopy and vegetation cover in most of the NHHIP components near Downtown neighborhoods make the future project a valuable opportunity to address this condition. Preliminary visions of future amenities in and around Downtown include adding an average of at least 35 trees per reconstructed NHHIP bridge and roadway. The EaDo Cap Connector planning and design study will complement other NHHIP improvements by providing opportunities for additional trees to mitigate heat island effects.

### Proactively address equity

The EaDo Cap Connector is a civic opportunity for Houston, a public asset that enhances equity in Houston's urban core in several important ways. As a connector, the EaDo Cap brings disadvantaged communities abutting Downtown closer to economic, cultural and civic opportunities. As a destination, the Connector will be designed to provide areas of public assembly, consonant with community need, as public areas are not available in nearby dense public housing. As a transportation opportunity, the Connector will enable disadvantaged community members access to Downtown by multi-modal means, easing the cost of moving about the City and providing an increasingly equitable access to opportunity. As part of a larger NHHIP effort to address resiliency efforts in Houston, the EaDo Cap will mitigate the effects of severe weather conditions in turn sparing nearby underserved neighborhoods from the life altering flooding events of the past.

### Criterion No. 4: Mobility and Community Connectivity

The NHHIP project itself fills a long-awaited need for mobility improvements in Houston's urban core. The planning and design study in support of the EaDo Cap Connector has a primary purpose to enhance mobility and community connectivity above and beyond the NHHIP project goals. A key element of the vision for the future NHHIP EaDo Cap Connector is improving system-wide connectivity with new connections to access transit, micromobility, and mobility

on-demand. The EaDo Cap Connector can serve as a hub and cornerstone for new connections and mobility improvements that eliminate current accessibility gaps for all users in the urban core. Funding from the RAISE program will ensure that existing and any new plans for connectivity improvements and mitigation strategies are driven by direct engagement with communities of color and others with historically limited access to affordable modes of transportation by the physical barrier of the highway itself. Though Downtown has the capacity to be one of the most walkable areas in all of Houston, the primary mode of transportation for most near the project location is by personal automobile.

The primary mode of transportation near the EaDo Cap Connector location is car-centric.

Mode of Commute	#	% of Total
Drive	2,509	66.9%
Walk	1,056	28.2%
Public Transit	107	2.9%
Bike	41	1.1%
Other	35	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Expand non-automotive options

The success and strategy of Houston's Plan Downtown largely rests on stakeholder and community engagement. Those civic, political and neighborhood voices forming Plan Downtown helped establish a visionary goal for expanding non-automotive options in Downtown. The Green Loop strategy, as one of the means for achieving that goal, rests on the design of the NHHIP around Downtown and upon the connectivity contained in the civic opportunities that mitigate the NHHIP. The most impactful civic opportunity for the urban core community in Downtown Houston and the adjacent diverse neighborhoods is the EaDo Cap Connector.

A central purpose of the EaDo Cap Connector planning and design effort is to reconvene community groups previously engaged to help them plan for and shape the course of the NHHIP's implementation to ensure community-driven outcomes. It is vital to the project's success that community input, particularly with residents from underserved and disadvantaged communities directly within the proposed project area, is provided a platform to assess community needs, overlooked inequities, and promising new avenues for developing connectivity. Every segment of the broader NHHIP project has been the subject of an extensive planning process with significant public involvement, but detailed programming requires more intensive community engagement to foster better design solutions that genuinely expand non-automotive options for all.

The EaDo Cap Connector portion of the NHHIP has the potential to fill a major mobility gap in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods by providing missing links to existing and future bikeways, community amenities, and public transportation, allowing for more seamless and cohesive mobility enhancements and safety. One such example is the missing connection directly near the EaDo Cap Connector project location to the Texas Bicycle Tourism Network. The EaDo Cap Connector can serve as an important trailhead and connector to a critical segment in TxDOT's statewide trail plan that runs along the southern edge of the future project at Lamar Street and does not currently meet state and local safety standards. Increasing physical activity

through active modes of transportation will be one of the planning and design study's key objectives. According to a 2019 report published by the Rails to Trails Conservancy in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), active transportation increases physical activity, decreases risk of chronic disease, and reduces personal and national health care costs.

### **Universal Design and access for all**

One of the most important goals for the EaDo Cap Connector planning and design study will be to evaluate the universal design concepts that can be included in the project to create an inclusive civic and public space, including developing detailed concepts to show how the improvements go beyond basic ADA inclusivity requirements by designing environments to be usable by all people, including those that may be hearing impaired, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. For example, the Downtown District and key partners will work to include project elements that ensure wider paths for all users to ensure room for stopping, checking directions, discerning potential hazards, resting, and turning around without slowing down mobility on shared spaces and paths. Additionally, the study will address how those that are hearing impaired can gather and sign while facing each other to use the future EaDo Cap Connector space and connections safely. Convenient, nearby places to set down coffee cups, bags, and other items are important for people who use both hands to communicate through sign language. Wide paths will also be considered in the context of ensuring multiple signers can have a conversation in a safe location.

Another example of planning for universal design involves addressing the needs of Houston's diverse residents. For example, a large percentage of communities near the project location operate with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and may require engagement tools, design solutions, and programmatic elements in a different language, such as in Spanish or Vietnamese. To have equitable programmatic outcomes, the planning and design phase of the EaDo Cap Connector must be inclusive and accessible to all from the start of the public engagement phase to beyond its future construction, which should feature things like wayfinding signage in different languages other than English that provide a genuine sense of design and accessibility for all.

### **Increasing intermodal and multimodal freight movement**

According to the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's 100 Most Congested Roadways in Texas, published in 2020, the existing footprint of the NHHIP, which is directly in the location of the future EaDo Cap Connector, will improve mobility on Texas' fifth most congested roadway. One of the biggest benefits of the NHHIP will be to improve intermodal and multimodal mobility of freight from the Port of Houston, which uses this key corridor, to the entire U.S. In fact, the Port of Houston is the number one port in the nation by total waterborne tonnage of goods moved. Thus, the additional capacity improvements will directly improve mobility for the trucking industry on one its most important pathways, which impacts distribution of goods from the Port of Houston to stores nationwide. The planning and design study will consider how the EaDo Cap Connector's edges might help incorporate additional design benefits that ultimately benefit freight efficiencies and last-mile deliveries. To that end, the planning process will consider the Port of Houston as an important and valued community stakeholder and partner.

## Criterion No. 5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

### **Improve intermodal / multimodal freight mobility**

In 2019, the Houston – Galveston Area Council’s transportation network carried 882 million tons of freight, of which 401 million tons were carried on the roadway network by truck. H-GAC forecasts freight tonnage to grow by 2.1 percent annually until 2050 to a total of 1.7 billion tons of freight. Additionally, by 2050, the truck tonnage is forecasted to increase from 46 percent to 56 percent. Port Houston, which is accessed by multiple major highways, including I-69, was responsible for handling over 275 million tons of cargo in 2020. The NHHIP is projected to reduce congestion of freight along one of its key national corridors. Initial TxDOT estimates indicate that the NHHIP build through Downtown Houston would help the Port of Houston optimize freight tonnage above its expected 10 percent growth rate by 2050.

### **Facilitate tourism opportunities, promote long-term economic growth and other broader economic & fiscal benefits, and land use productivity**

The east side of Downtown is home to many of the city’s most iconic and visited tourism and event destinations: Minute Maid Park, Toyota Center, Discovery Green, George R. Brown Convention Center, Avenida Houston, and two large convention hotels. Additionally, EaDo is home to Shell Stadium, home of the Houston Dash and Dynamo soccer teams, and many of Houston’s most sought-after food and beverage purveyors are in EaDo within blocks of the proposed EaDo Cap Connector. The EaDo Cap Connector’s study area is home to nearly 20 acres of surface parking lots, many used for event parking, which could be developed as mixed-use sites to further enhance the area for residents and visitors. Connections from the Project to Minute Maid Park, Shell Stadium, the George R. Brown Convention Center, and Discovery Green require an elevated level of planning and design solutions.

The creation of an entertainment district, via connecting the existing entertainment assets with the EaDo Cap Connector, will provide visitors with additional access and amenities. For example, Downtown was the site of Super Bowl Live, a week-long fan experience zone occupying Discovery Green and almost five full city blocks (approximately 29 acres) during the 2017 Super Bowl week. Similarly, music festivals such as Austin City Limits have multiple stages for performers and often require grounds larger than what Downtown Houston can currently offer today.

Houston cherishes its public spaces. Hermann Park, Houston’s first public park, attracted the establishment and growth of institutions like Rice University, the Texas Medical Center, and the Museum District. Market Square Park was created in 1854 and now anchors the Main Street / Market Square Historic District. Discovery Green has transformed the eastern side of Downtown by increasing convention activity and inducing over \$500 million in Downtown development. Buffalo Bayou Park creates a gateway to Downtown through various destinations, pedestrian bridges, and skyline views. The surrounding neighborhoods of Buffalo Bayou Park have also experienced substantial residential and commercial growth recently. Major Houston public spaces have anchored neighborhoods and become foci for investment and growth for generations. The EaDo Cap Connector has the potential to catalyze the same.

There are roughly 27 acres of developable land within a quarter-mile radius of the EaDo Cap Connector. Several development sites are immediately near the proposed project, just north of

Texas Avenue and the METRO light rail and will be particularly well-positioned to evolve into high-density, mixed-use space that engages with the proposed EaDo Cap Connector. These parcels will also benefit from stronger roadway connections provided by the future EaDo Cap Connector.

### **Promote local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms**

TxDOT, the City’s and Downtown District’s strategic partner, has a robust Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program. Participation goals are set on all federally funded projects to encourage contracting with DBE-certified small businesses. TxDOT matches the FHWA DBE triennial goal methodology for FYs 2020-2022 overall goal of 14.4 percent. Different from DBE goals, Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Program goals are implemented statewide; any contracts or purchases with businesses actively certified as a HUB will count towards the goal for the appropriate spending category. Additionally, our internal procurement process at the Downtown District establishes the goal that 25 percent of project expenses be with DBE-certified small businesses – and that goal is regularly exceeded.

### **Promote wealth building and create good-paying jobs**

Other infrastructure innovations have generated significant economic benefits across the country. Klyde Warren Park in Dallas generated over \$1.3 billion in economic benefits to Dallas between 2009 – 2016. Since 2000, area real estate value increases with “The 606” in Chicago have been over twice that of citywide increases. Lastly, “The High Line” in New York is projected to generate \$1 billion in new property tax revenues to the City, an 800 percent fiscal ROI. A recent study commissioned by the Downtown District estimates that the NHHIP will create over 92,000 direct jobs with an additional 89,000 indirect jobs. The overall statewide economic impact of NHHIP is estimated at \$19.2 billion with the EaDo Cap itself contributing \$1.615 billion.

The EaDo Cap Connector’s economic benefits are projected to be as high as \$1.615 billion.

<b>Economic Benefits</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>High</b>
Visitor Spending	\$240M	\$270M	\$300M
New Events	\$240M	\$360M	\$480M
Real Estate Development	\$355M	\$465M	\$575M
Real Estate Premiums	\$170M	\$215M	\$260M
<b>Total Economic Benefit</b>	<b>\$1.005B</b>	<b>\$1.310B</b>	<b>\$1.615B</b>

### **Criterion No. 6: State of Good Repair**

I-45 was built more than 50 years ago, when the population in TxDOT’s Houston District service area was under 2 million people. Since 1970, the area’s population has grown by more than 200 percent to roughly 7 million people. By 2050, the current population of this area is expected to nearly double to roughly 13 million. The I-45 corridor through Houston is home to 9 of the top 25 most congested roadways in Texas.

A primary project purpose of the NHHIP is to restore and modernize the existing core infrastructure assets that have met their useful life. Modernizing means incorporating project components by working directly with impacted communities to reconnect them in unprecedented ways. In Segment 3 that directly impacts the Downtown urban core of Houston, the

reconfiguration entails building 3 arch signature bridges, 24 multi-modal Garden Bridges, and 4 Cap Connectors designed to span the highways at select trenched segments. TxDOT continues to work with community stakeholders like the City and the Downtown District on mitigating measures for Segment 3 of the NHHIP. TxDOT has incorporated community suggested designs for non-motorized modes of transportation that will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and will integrate with the City's complete streets approach.

Funding from the RAISE for the planning and design study will enable the Downtown District to consider community-driven improvements to further reduce construction and maintenance burdens through the application of efficient and well-integrated design. The Downtown District is already engaged in ongoing discussions with TxDOT to plan for the costs associated with any connectivity improvements beyond TxDOT's commitment, especially on the EaDo Cap Connector. Through partnership with affiliate entities, the Downtown District is prepared and committed to assume future capital expenses through formal legal instruments, such as an Advanced Funding Agreement (AFA) with TxDOT, as well as subsequent maintenance and operations of the EaDo Cap Connector amenities.

The planning study will consider ways to mitigate Houston's notorious average annual rain amount of 55 inches. The average annual rain amount and any resiliency-related mitigation strategies are critical to maintaining state of a state repair for the future reconstructed asset. The segment of the highway that encircles Downtown Houston also serves as a hurricane evacuation route. That designation establishes the requirement that the route and its key connections must be passable leading up to a hurricane making landfall along the Gulf Coast of Texas. If left unimproved and thus not modernized to its fullest potential, the portion of the NHHIP that encircles Downtown Houston and is the location of the future EaDo Cap Connector would leave many underserved communities particularly vulnerable during an historic rain event or hurricane situation.

The planning study will highlight specific ways that the EaDo Cap Connector could additionally mitigate stormwater effects as a means for directly protecting underserved neighborhoods in the project area. As such, the EaDo Cap Connector could help reduce the need for downstream stormwater treatment infrastructure. Today, there are no stormwater quality treatment facilities along the Downtown area, which impacts local, regional, and state watersheds every year. The Downtown District will work with TxDOT to consider additional measures, such as stormwater swales, innovative stormwater filter technologies, and other green infrastructure in strategic locations along the EaDo Cap Connector and its many future connections. These crucial upfront infrastructure investments will reduce the need for stormwater treatment infrastructure and associated maintenance and operations downstream in underserved communities near the project location.

Left unimproved, poor access and unsafe conditions in the NHHIP corridor threaten the mobility of people and goods and is an impediment to economic development and job creation. Further degradation of the corridor also imperils the efficiency of bus, light rail and bike and pedestrian investments in the entire Houston Metro region, while future planned investments in Complete



Streets within and beyond the existing NHHIP footprint will strengthen ties to bike, pedestrian and transit system options.

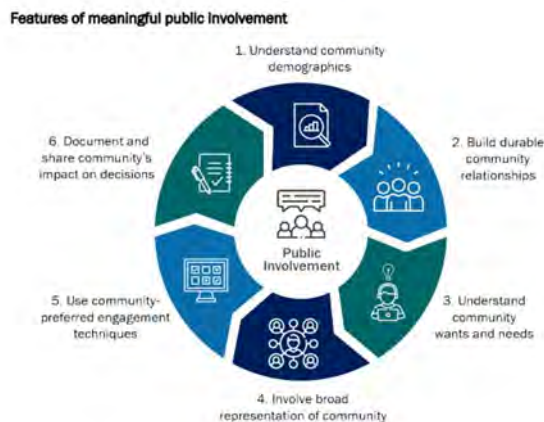
Finally, as previously discussed, one of the central aims of the planning and design study is to identify the additional structural support needed to accommodate the EaDo Cap Connector design, these calculations demand an elevated sense of state of good repair for all partners.

## Criterion No. 7: Partnership and Collaboration

### Meaningful and inclusive engagement

The NHHIP Segment 3 Civic Opportunities proposed for enhancing neighborhood connectivity enjoy broad community support. The EaDo Cap Connector is acknowledged as the most impactful of those Civic Opportunities. The planning and design study will recognize community stakeholders as integral partners in building a consensus for the use and purpose of the EaDo Cap Connector as a critical enhancement to Houston’s urban core. The Downtown District will apply RAISE grant funds to implement a thoughtful, respectful, and culturally competent project-specific engagement strategy to maximize community benefits and mitigate any further risks associated with the NHHIP’s reconstruction and reconfiguration through Downtown. As such, we will use the USDOT’s Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making Guide, especially the six key indicators developed by Brown et al., 2019, to determine and measure our engagement success.

The Downtown District and partners will use the six key indicators below to guide our public involvement.



### TxDOT engagement with community and partners

In partnership with the Downtown District and many other community-based organizations and stakeholders, TxDOT has led the community engagement efforts from the early conception of the NHHIP. After release of the Draft EIS in 2017, TxDOT continued NHHIP public engagement through community meetings and by posting updated technical reports for public comments. Feedback received during that period resulted in project design changes and new information on the project’s environmental concerns, impacts, and mitigation measures. In total, TxDOT attended over 300 stakeholder meetings with individuals, groups, or organizations during the project’s development.

TxDOT will continue to lead community engagement efforts throughout NHHIP construction, including meetings designed according to the FHWA-approved Environmental Handbook for Public Involvement. Per the VRA, TxDOT will engage affected communities in advance of these meetings and provide meeting notices in English and in the most common languages spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) in each community. During these public meetings, TxDOT will provide the community with up-to-date information regarding the Project, informational assistance regarding the implementation of the VRA, and provide an open forum for the community to provide feedback, raise issues, and ask questions. TxDOT will consider and incorporate information provided at these meetings, as applicable, during the design and construction of the NHHIP.

### **The Downtown District and the City of Houston**

In partnership with the Downtown District, the City maintains several tools for ongoing community engagement around the NHHIP project and other initiatives, including an online repository of project information and an online forum to help communities understand the NEPA process. The City, together with the Downtown District, established the NHHIP Facilitation Group to provide a community-centered approach for direct feedback on local priorities. When surveyed, the Facilitation Group supported the Civic Opportunities for connectivity and resiliency proposed for Segment 3 of the NHHIP, particularly the EaDo Cap Connector project.

The Downtown District will partner with many adjacent districts, especially the East Downtown Management District and many others most directly impacted by the development of the EaDo Cap Connector to assist in leveraging community engagement on the planning and design segments of the Connector. The Downtown District has worked with and continues to partner with each of these organizations on several impactful projects in Houston's urban core.

Community-Based Organizations engaged throughout NHHIP planning and design process.

<b>Super Neighborhoods</b>	<b>Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones</b>	<b>Management Districts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown #61</li> <li>• Fourth Ward #60</li> <li>• Greater Eastwood #64</li> <li>• Greater Fifth Ward #55</li> <li>• Greater Heights #15</li> <li>• Greater Third Ward #67</li> <li>• Midtown #62</li> <li>• Museum Park #66</li> <li>• Near Northside #51</li> <li>• Neartown-Montrose #24</li> <li>• Washington Avenue Coalition / Memorial Park #22</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Downtown #15</li> <li>• Fourth Ward #14</li> <li>• Greater Houston #24</li> <li>• Main Street / Market Square #3</li> <li>• Midtown #2</li> <li>• Montrose #27</li> <li>• OST/Almeda #7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown</li> <li>• East Downtown</li> <li>• Greater Northside</li> <li>• Greater Southeast</li> <li>• Midtown</li> </ul>

Attesting to our history of and ability to forge working partnerships to identify and achieve transportation goals in Houston, the table below represents the RAISE relevant goals we have identified in Plan Downtown and the partnerships we have nurtured to achieve those milestone efforts as they relate to the NHHIP.

RAISE Grant Relevant Goal	Relevant Plans	C l i m a t e	E n e r g y	H e a l t h	H o u s i n g	P o l l u t i o n	T r a n s p o r t a t i o n	W o r k f o r c e
Expand opportunities for safely walking and biking in the neighborhood, encourage active living	Complete Communities: Near Northside; Plan Houston; Plan Downtown	•		•			•	
Prioritize streetscape enhancements on major arterial roads	Complete Communities: Near Northside; Plan Houston; Plan Downtown	•		•		•	•	
Expand area bike lanes and hike and bike trails	Complete Communities: Near Northside and Third Ward; Plan Downtown			•		•	•	
Link the Little White Oak Greenway to Quitman Station	Complete Communities: Near Northside			•			•	
Expand public art	Complete Communities: Near Northside and Third Ward; Plan Houston; Resilient Houston; Plan Downtown			•	•			
Foster mixed-use development in the neighborhood	Complete Communities: Third Ward; Plan Downtown	•	•	•	•		•	•
Improve area streets (curb and gutter, cross walk striping, streetlights, wheelchair ramps, landscaping, and tree planting)	Complete Communities: Third Ward; Plan Downtown	•			•		•	
Create a cultural trail through the Third Ward that connects businesses, historic landmarks, art institutions, and parks	Complete Communities: Third Ward			•			•	
Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT)	Houston Climate Action Plan	•	•	•		•	•	
Restore, protect, and enhance Houston's natural ability to capture and store carbon	Houston Climate Action Plan	•	•	•		•	•	
Provide equitable and safe mobility choices	Houston Climate Action Plan	•		•			•	
Equal access to opportunity and prosperity and expanded access to wealth-building opportunities	Plan Houston; Resilient Houston	•					•	•
A community that respects our history	Plan Houston			•				
An affordable, multi-modal transportation network providing convenient access and mobility for people and goods	Plan Houston; Resilient Houston	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ensure all neighborhoods are healthy, safe, and climate ready	Resilient Houston	•	•	•	•		•	
Demonstrate leadership on climate change through action	Resilient Houston	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Modernize Houston's infrastructure to address the challenges of the future	Resilient Houston; Plan Downtown	•	•	•		•	•	•

**Community-based stewardship, management, and partnerships**

The award of a RAISE grant to plan, design, and engineer the EaDo Cap Connector will permit the Downtown District to establish community needs, cost estimates, and engineering

requirements to realize critical neighborhood connectivity in partnership with community organizations, TxDOT and the City.

### **Integrating partnerships for equitable development outcomes**

The Downtown District will apply the RAISE grant funds to plan, design, and engineer the EaDo Cap as a robust opportunity for connecting formerly divided disadvantage neighborhoods and to simultaneously address necessary sustainability and resiliency improvements in the footprint of the project. A linchpin of this effort will be to engage Downtown stakeholders and community and community-based organizations to identify the needs of the diverse and underrepresented neighborhoods adjacent to the EaDo Cap Connector. The RAISE funds will, further, permit the Downtown District to work with the City and TxDOT to anticipate the costs required to realize this Civic Opportunity in a form that will benefit residents and employees as well as attract local, regional, and national visitors to Houston.

## **Criterion No. 8: Innovation**

### **Innovative technology**

The primary purpose of the EaDo Cap Connector is to apply innovative technology to reconnect and stitch together neighborhoods long divided by the construction of the highway system through Downtown Houston decades ago. To make this innovative design solution a reality for Downtown Houston, the EaDo Cap Connector will require a detailed planning and design study that organizes the public's vision and concrete ideas into a formal master plan document that further integrates innovative policy in surface transportation planning projects into a holistic redevelopment effort.

TxDOT's NHHIP project is already introducing new technologies. For example, TxDOT is monitoring air quality in real time and will continue beyond the project's numerous construction phases. In another example, TxDOT will use sensors to monitor real-time conditions of pavement quality, signage, crosswalks, transit headways, and other assets. The Downtown District will use grant funding for our planning study to explore additional technologies that can be leveraged near and along the EaDo Cap Connector location. The planning study will explore ways that future construction processes can use low-carbon and other innovative materials, including different forms of sustainable wood decking, such as reclaimed wood and bamboo. The use of renewable sources of energy onsite, such as solar panels, will also be considered.

The planning and design study examines opportunities to integrate the latest green infrastructure technologies and best practices which could usher in lower maintenance and operational costs of the future EaDo Cap Connector. Options to be examined include the latest in water efficiency technologies and stormwater management. With over 30-acres of programmable space, the planning study could consider ways to increase social engagement and inclusivity for underrepresented groups near the project location by incorporating community gardens into future design plans. As part of a workforce development opportunity, the planning study could consider direct ways that community gardens could provide urban farming training and educational programs.

The EaDo Cap Connector planning study will consider other smart technologies that can be used to further meet universal design and inclusivity targets by considering the full realm of smart

technologies. The initial idea is that smart technologies will help reduce fuel consumption and increase safety and efficiency for all users. Of concern to the Downtown District, is exploring ways to digitalize potential conflicts at the curb and other strategic locations throughout the project location that genuinely increases and optimizes access to multimodal transportation options for all.

### **Innovative project delivery**

The entire portion of the NHHIP’s Segment 3, which encompasses the future EaDo Cap Connector, will be delivered in design-build and design-bid-build arrangements with the goal of facilitating accelerated delivery. TxDOT requires that qualifications statements contain evidence that each proposer can obtain payment and performance bonds to help secure the contractor’s obligations with respect to each component of the project. Each payment and performance bond is required to be in the amount of 100 percent of the design-build price for construction work for the applicable component.

### **Innovative financing**

Realizing the EaDo Cap Connector as a robust benefit to Houston’s urban core will involve funding partnerships between the City, Tax Increment Financing entities, Management Districts, as well as grant awards from state and federal sources and philanthropic entities. TxDOT will provide a base condition agreed to in its negotiations with the FHWA and will collaborate with the Downtown District and other third parties to determine the design, construction, maintenance and operation costs beyond that base condition.

## **IV. Project Readiness**

### **Project schedule**

Upon award, the Downtown District is ready to move forward immediately with our planning, design and engineering study. TxDOT and our community partners have indicated their support for the study to make the EaDo Cap Connector a community-driven infrastructure asset.

Downtown District Staff will be available to engage with USDOT Staff to prepare a Grant Agreement and execute the agreement through any necessary action. We anticipate project scoping and consultant selection to occur immediately upon the execution of the grant agreement. The schedule below reflects the core project tasks described above and the tasks included in the project scope, which are based on a preliminary cost estimate (see Appendix B).

<b>Project Phase</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Phase 1 – Project Kickoff and Framework	2 months
Phase 2 – Analysis and Programming	3 months
Phase 3 – Project Scenarios	5 months
Phase 4 – Final Master Plan	5 months
Phase 5 – 30-60-90% Design Plans	4-5 years following completion of Master Plan

### **Capacity to deliver**

The Downtown District has the technical expertise and staff capacity to successfully implement the proposed statement of work on time and within budget. The Downtown District’s project manager for the NHHIP project will continue to serve as project manager for the RAISE-funded

planning effort, bringing prior knowledge of the corridor and established relationships with community stakeholders to the team. The project manager will manage consultants, oversee reporting to USDOT, and be the project's primary point of contact. Additional Downtown District Staff are prepared to provide direct support to the project as technical experts to provide input on design decisions, review consultant deliverables, and ensure the project meets quality standards. Staff from within the City and TxDOT will provide additional support and expertise to deliver the planning and design phase of the future EaDo Cap Connector.

### **Financially sound grantee**

The Downtown District will receive and administer the RAISE funds. As the recipient and administrator, the Downtown District conducts an annual audit and would work closely with the USDOT and TxDOT to manage the RAISE funds responsibly.

### **Strong history of effective grant management**

The Downtown District and its partner agencies have a strong history of effective grant management. Since its inception, the Downtown District has developed the capacity to effectively manage federal funding and developed controls and policies to ensure program compliance. Staff will maintain an active relationship with federal representatives to ensure any questions regarding RAISE grant program performance requirements are met adequately and promptly.

### **Risk management**

As part of the effort to develop the proposed scope of work for the RAISE grant, the team identified potential risks to the project as it moves through the planning and design and engineering phases. The Downtown District team will use a project risk register or similar document to detail, monitor and mitigate project risks as they appear. It is meant to be a living document regularly reviewed by the project team throughout the project's life as new risks emerge and others are addressed. Risks are identified by their potential impact on the schedule or to the project cost.

### **Ability to address cost overruns**

Managing change is an essential component of project management. Although the risk register will be a valuable tool throughout the life of the planning effort, it does not mean that changes that impact the budget will not happen. Realizing the full potential of the EaDo Cap Connector is a strategic priority in the Downtown District's Five-Year Strategic Alignment Plan. The Downtown District is fully committed financially to covering any potential cost overruns. While the Downtown District is not required to provide a local match because the majority of the future EaDo Cap Connector planning project is in a designated Historically Disadvantaged Community and an Area of Persistent Poverty, the Downtown District is committing to a match of **\$3,000,000.00** towards the RAISE budget. Should the project experience cost overruns, the Downtown District will draw down from its annual budget.

## Appendix A

### Financial Commitment and Letters of Support

<u>Entity</u>	<u>Type of Entity</u>
Downtown District	Grant Applicant ( <i>Financial Commitment &amp; Support</i> )
Senator John Cornyn	United States Senate (TX)
Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee	Member of Congress, 18th District (TX)
Mayor John Whitmire	Mayor City of Houston
Senator Carol Alvarado	State Senator, District 6 (TX)
Senator Borris L. Miles	State Senator, District 13 (TX)
State Representative Christina Morales	District 145, Harris County (TX)
Commissioner Rodney Ellis	Harris County Precinct One
Commissioner Adrian Garcia	Harris County Precinct Two
Councilman Mario Castillo	Houston City Council, District H
Councilman Joaquin Martinez	Houston City Council, District I
Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)	State Transportation Agency
Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)	Regional Transportation Agency
METRO	City Transportation Agency
East Downtown Management District (EaDo)	Management District/TIRZ
Midtown Redevelopment Authority	Management District/TIRZ
Fifth Ward Redevelopment Authority	Management District/TIRZ
OST/Almeda Redevelopment Authority	Management District/TIRZ
Greater Southeast Management District	Management District/TIRZ
Greater Northside Management District	Management District/TIRZ
Greater Black Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce
Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce
Houston Astros	Sports - Baseball Stadium/Team
Houston Dynamo-Dash	Sports - Soccer Stadium/Team
Houston Rockets	Sports - Soccer Stadium/Team
Greater Houston Partnership	Regional - Chamber of Commerce
Houston First	Local - Chamber of Commerce
Buffalo Bayou Partnership	Local - Parks & Waterways
Discovery Green	Local - Parks & Waterways
Joyride Houston	Local - Business/Recreation



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Houston, Texas 77010

TEL 713.650.3022

[downtowndistrict.org](http://downtowndistrict.org)  
[downtownhouston.org](http://downtownhouston.org)

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Letter of Financial Commitment (\$3 million) and Support of Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) RAISE Application for East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Connector Planning & Design Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of the Downtown District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the NHHIP Segment 3 EaDo Cap Connector Planning & Design Study. In addition, the Downtown District is prepared to make a financial commitment of \$3 million dollars in support of the EaDo Cap Connector Planning & Design Study.

The Downtown District, along with its affiliate organizations, has led the design efforts for the NHHIP Segment 3, Civic Opportunities in conjunction with our neighboring communities over the past decade. The Downtown District represents one of many communities where transportation facility improvements like the EaDo Cap Connector Planning & Design Study could take place through the NHHIP project.

The RAISE grant will support the joint efforts of the City of Houston and TxDOT to address the barriers posed by the current highway structure, allow us to engage community members and stakeholders, and has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway such as integrating mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development to directly benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities.

Funding this grant award will demonstrate a commitment to enhancing connectivity in communities that have long dealt with the impacts of highways as a barrier. Safe, multimodal accessibility increases access to economic opportunities and ensures that Houston is a city that prioritizes equity in public investments.

These improvements serve the spirit of the Voluntary Resolution Agreement signed by FHWA and TxDOT on March 3, 2023, which reinforces the commitment by TxDOT to provide for mitigation of impacts of the highway expansion through preservation and creation of multimodal forms of transportation, including streets and bike lanes, among other improvements.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact me at [kris.larson@downtowndistrict.org](mailto:kris.larson@downtowndistrict.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kristopher Larson, AICP, LPM  
President & CEO



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

February 26, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston's application to the Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equality (RAISE) discretionary grant. As you and your staff review the proposal, I trust you will give full consideration to the many strengths of their application.

Downtown Houston is currently seeking funding for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP). This is a \$9.7 billion realignment and reconstruction project led by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for IH-45 and other highways. The Downtown District is requesting funding to complete a Master Plan and Feasibility Study for a park and open space amenity over the proposed 30-acre concrete cap.

The proposed master planning effort aims to expand on the prior visioning work and develop a specific program for the 30-acre park amenity over TxDOT's concrete cap. This will allow the Downtown District, in collaboration with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and its public and private partners, to positively impact the NHHIP's fundamental transportation challenges, including safety, quality of life, mobility, community connectivity, economic competitiveness, and opportunity.

I would appreciate your efforts to ensure that I am kept informed of the progress of this application. Please contact Bryson Albert (Bryson\_Albert@cornyn.senate.gov), my Grants Coordinator, with any developments regarding this application soon as they are available.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator

JUDICIARY  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
Ranking Member  
Crime, and Federal Government Surveillance  
Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement  
Constitution and Limited Government

February 13, 2024

HOMELAND SECURITY  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection  
Border Security & Enforcement

BUDGET COMMITTEE

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.  
Washington, DC 20590.

**RE: Downtown District RAISE  
Application for East Downtown  
Study for North Houston Highway  
Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently in the planning and design stages for the reconstruction of NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort in lockstep with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office.

The work proposed is rooted in community engagement to advance a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open area and green space over the trenched section of the highway to be designated as the East Downtown, "EaDo" Cap. The Cap is designed to cover the open trenched area, providing green space and connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core. The planning study aligns with the transportation project led by the TxDOT District Office, which is currently working on the schematic design phase.

If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add

innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed. Its plan will promote long-term, equitable, and inclusive economic development opportunities that will have significant local and regional impacts. The physical reconnection of East Downtown Houston neighborhoods will address pedestrian-specific concerns of safety and accessibility, while building on area ongoing public transit investments. Furthermore, it also has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway such as integrating mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development to benefit directly low-income and disadvantaged communities.

I request full and fair consideration of the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application would appreciate. Should you have questions regarding this letter of support I may be reached through my Chief of Staff,. [Lillie Coney at Lillie.Coney@mail.house.gov](mailto:Lillie.Coney@mail.house.gov).

Very truly yours,



Sheila Jackson Lee  
MEMBER OF  
CONGRESS



# CITY OF HOUSTON

**John Whitmire**

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311  
[www.houstontx.gov](http://www.houstontx.gov)

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As Mayor of Houston, the nation's fourth largest city, it is my pleasure to express my support for the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the EaDo Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

The physical reconnection of EaDo has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway such as integrating mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development to directly benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities.

The NHHIP plan will promote long-term, equitable, and inclusive economic development opportunities that will have significant local and regional impacts. If funded, the Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. It will connect the urban fabric divided 60 years ago when the interstate was originally constructed.

I would appreciate your approval of this application. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Whitmire  
Mayor

Council Members: Amy Peck Tarsha Jackson Abbie Kamin Carolyn Evans-Shabazz Fred Flickinger Tiffany D. Thomas Mary Nan Huffman  
Mario Castillo Joaquin Martinez Edward Pollard Martha Castex-Tatum Julian Ramirez Willie Davis Twila Carter Letitia Plummer Sallie Alcorn  
Controller: Chris Hollins



**CAROL ALVARADO**  
STATE SENATOR  
DISTRICT 6

February 22, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Prior to my election to the Texas Senate, I was the Chair of the Texas House Urban Affairs Committee, which exercised oversight over the operations of various state departments and agencies. I also served on the Houston City Council, which allowed me to become familiar with the transportation and infrastructure needs of our city.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highway 45, much of which, within Houston's boundaries, is in my state Senate district. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting and open programmed green space – the East Downtown "EaDo" cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway and will provide connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core. Trenching of the highway was a request by EaDo community representatives.

My experiencing in representing these impacted communities of Houston cause me to be excited about the opportunities that the EaDo cap will create. The physical reconnection of East Downtown has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway. It will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. The NHHIP plan will promote long-term, equitable and inclusive economic development opportunities that will have significant local

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AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711  
(512) 463-0106  
FAX: (512) 463-0346

**CAROL ALVARADO**STATE SENATOR  
DISTRICT 6

and regional impacts. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT and other key community partners will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Alvarado".

Carol Alvarado  
State Senator, District 6

DISTRICT OFFICE  
4450 HARRISBURG  
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HOUSTON, TEXAS 77011  
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## BORRIS L. MILES

STATE SENATOR • DISTRICT 13

COMMITTEES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE • HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES • NATURAL RESOURCES & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • NOMINATIONS • TRANSPORTATION

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am pleased to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, part of which is in the senatorial district that I represent. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the East Downtown, "EaDo," Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

I have great hopes about the opportunities that will occur with the creation of the EaDo Cap and its positive effect upon my district. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed the Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

I would appreciate your approval of this application. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Borris L. Miles  
Senator, District 13

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FAX: (512) 463-0006  
DIAL 711 FOR RELAY CALLS

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FAX: (713) 665-0009

NORTHEAST OFFICE:  
3300 LYONS AVENUE, SUITE 301  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020  
(713) 223-0387  
FAX: (713) 223-0524

FORT BEND OFFICE:  
2440 TEXAS PARKWAY, SUITE 110  
MISSOURI CITY, TEXAS 77489  
(281) 261-2360  
FAX: (281) 261-4726



## Christina Morales

State Representative • District 145  
Harris County

February 20, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

It is my pleasure to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Elected in 2019 to the Texas State Legislature, I have served as Vice Chair of the International Relations and Economic Development Committee and am a member of the House Committees on Culture, Recreation and Tourism. In my elected position, I participate on committees, having oversight over department budgets and agency operations. Prior to my election, I served as a Houston City Planning Commissioner, which reviews city street classifications, and transportation options, along with its other responsibilities.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, part of which is in the House district that I represent. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the East Downtown, "EaDo," Cap. The Cap will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

Many development and recreational opportunities will occur with the creation of the EaDo Cap; It will have a positive effect upon my district. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed, the Cap will reweave the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

I would appreciate your approval of this application. Please contact Hector Beltran, District Director at [Hector.Beltran@house.texas.gov](mailto:Hector.Beltran@house.texas.gov) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Christina Morales  
Texas House of Representatives  
HD 145





February 20, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District’s RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

It is my pleasure to express my support for the Houston Downtown Management District’s (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the EaDo Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for diverse communities of EaDo and the City’s urban core.

I have seen the impact that highway projects can have in the neighborhoods of our cities when planning is not carefully done, leaving our inner-city neighborhoods devastated by division and massive man-made barriers. This is why I support the connectivity of this plan for the EaDo Cap. The physical reconnection of EaDo by this Segment has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway. It can integrate mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development and directly benefit low-income and disadvantaged communities. It will connect the urban fabric divided 60 years ago when the interstate was originally constructed.

Furthermore, I am currently the Commissioner of Harris County Precinct One, which County entered into an agreement with TxDOT related to this highway. As designed, these changes will improve safety, drainage and traffic movement. The proposed NHHIP plan will promote long-term, equitable, and inclusive economic development opportunities that will have significant

**HARRIS COUNTY**  
**COMMISSIONER RODNEY ELLIS**



**PRECINCT ONE**  
PUBLIC SERVICE • FAIR OPPORTUNITY • EQUAL JUSTICE

local and regional impacts. If funded, the Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies.

I wholeheartedly support the application for funding of a planning grant. Please contact me at [Rodney.Ellis@cp1.hctx.net](mailto:Rodney.Ellis@cp1.hctx.net) with any questions you have. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Ellis". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sincerely  
Rodney Ellis  
Commissioner  
Harris County Precinct One



## Commissioner Adrian Garcia

Harris County Precinct 2

1001 Preston, Suite 924 • Houston, TX 77002 • Tel: 713.755.6220 • Fax: 713.755.8810

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3

This letter expresses my support for the Houston Downtown Management District (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The Downtown District will use the grant for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

I grew up in Houston and have seen highway projects impact our cities when planning is not carefully done, leaving our inner-city neighborhoods devastated and divided. This is why I support the promise of a well-planned and designed connector, the EaDo Cap, to catalyze the development efforts that are currently underway. Adopted by TxDOT in its plan for the NHHIP, the EaDo Cap results from a below-grade freeway design recommended by residents of the East Downtown community separated from Downtown by the interstate's original design.

Following years of collaboration, the Downtown District is advancing the planning and design of the EaDo Cap – a 30-acre "lid" that will stretch across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown. The Downtown District will undertake a community-based planning and design program to realize an equitable outcome for the EaDo Cap that will connect the urban fabric of diverse neighborhoods formerly divided by the interstate's original construction.

As Harris County Commissioner of Precinct Two, I have been involved in many meetings and discussions about the NHHIP, particularly Segment 3, and I know it impacts my constituents. I strongly feel that the EaDo Cap will provide my constituents with more significant economic and cultural opportunities and promise an equitable remedy to the engineered transportation divisions created in the past.

I wholeheartedly support the application for funding of a planning grant. Please feel free to contact my office with any questions regarding this application. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely

Adrian Garcia, Commissioner  
Harris County Precinct Two



**MARIO CASTILLO**  
Houston City Council Member, District H

February 22, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

I'm writing to support the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) application for the FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. The grant will be instrumental in funding the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan, crucial initiatives to revitalize our urban landscape.

As a lifelong Houstonian, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of highway projects on our central city neighborhoods, particularly those adjacent to Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59. Too often, poorly executed planning has left our communities devastated and divided. Now, as a representative of my childhood neighborhood on Houston's City Council, I am committed to advocating for projects that prioritize thoughtful design and equitable outcomes.

The proposed EaDo Cap, a below-grade freeway design recommended by residents of the East Downtown community and adopted by TxDOT as part of the NHHIP plan, presents a unique opportunity to reconnect and revitalize our urban fabric. Spanning 30 acres, this innovative "lid" will stretch across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown, catalyzing economic and cultural development in the region.

The Downtown District's dedication to community engagement and sustainable design is commendable. Through a comprehensive planning and design program, they aim to ensure that the EaDo Cap reconnects diverse neighborhoods and fosters environmental stewardship and innovation.

The physical reconnection of East Downtown will have far-reaching benefits, spurring economic growth and fostering a sense of unity and inclusion among nearby communities. Therefore, please approve the Downtown District's RAISE grant application supporting this transformative project.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,





# CITY OF HOUSTON

Office of Council Member Joaquin Martinez, District I

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

I am pleased to write this letter in support of the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The Downtown District will use the grant for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

I was born and raised in the East End of Houston and have seen the impact that highway projects can have on our cities when planning leaves our inner-city neighborhoods devastated and divided. It is now my privilege to represent my childhood neighborhood on Houston's City Council. My experience leads me to support the promise of a well-planned and designed connector -- the EaDo Cap -- to catalyze development efforts currently underway. Adopted by TxDOT in its plan for the NHHIP, the EaDo Cap is the result of a below-grade freeway design recommended by residents of the East Downtown community separated from Downtown by the interstate's original design.

The Downtown District, following years of collaboration, is advancing planning and design of the EaDo Cap -- a 30-acre "lid" that will stretch across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown. The Downtown District will undertake a community-based planning and design program to realize an equitable outcome for the EaDo Cap that will connect the urban fabric of diverse neighborhoods formerly divided by the interstate's original construction.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect as it connects two major communities frequented by not only all Houstonians, but visitors as well. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur economic and cultural development and directly benefit nearby diverse communities. The grant will permit the Downtown District to engage the community in planning and designing innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies for the EaDo Cap.



125 EAST 11TH STREET, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | 512.463.8588 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

February 26, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
 Secretary of Transportation  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Texas Department of Transportation, I am pleased to support the 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application submitted by the Houston Downtown Management District (Downtown District) for their East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan. The award would fund planning, design, and engineering phases of the project.

The Downtown District has been working with TxDOT on the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) and has agreed to construct garden bridges, cap structures, and signature bridges to foster deeper connections between communities. This Cap is a 30-acre "lid" that will stretch across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown Houston. It will connect diverse neighborhoods and spur economic and cultural development by reconnecting East Downtown with Houston's urban core. The project will ensure that the Downtown District continues to move forward towards achieving the goal of safe and connected communities.

Thank you for considering this application. If you have any questions, please call me at (512) 305-9515 or you or your staff may contact Melanie Alvord, Director, Federal Affairs at [Melanie.Alvord@txdot.gov](mailto:Melanie.Alvord@txdot.gov) or (512) 944-5135.

Sincerely,

Marc D. Williams, P.E.  
 Executive Director

cc: Eliza C. Paul, P.E., District Engineer, Houston District  
 Melanie Alvord, Director, Federal Affairs Section



**HOUSTON- GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL**  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District’s RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

We are in support of the Houston Downtown Management District’s (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The Downtown District will use the grant for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council, as the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, is responsible for programming regional transportation projects.

The NHHIP is focused on reconstructing Interstate Highways 10, 45, and 59, segments of which encircle downtown Houston. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages of Segment 3 of the NHHIP bordering downtown Houston. The Downtown District, following years of collaboration, is advancing planning and design of a thirty-acre connector – the EaDo Cap – stretching across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown. The Downtown District will undertake a community-based planning and design program to realize an equitable outcome for the EaDo Cap that will connect the urban fabric of diverse neighborhoods formerly divided by the interstate’s original construction.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect because the physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur economic development and directly benefit nearby low-income and disadvantaged communities. The grant will permit the Downtown District to engage the community in planning and designing innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies for the EaDo Cap.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or our Transportation Director, [Craig.Raborn@h-gac.com](mailto:Craig.Raborn@h-gac.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Wemple', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chuck Wemple



## Mission Statement

"Provide safe, clean, reliable, accessible and friendly public transportation services to our region."

## Board of Directors

Sanjay Ramabhadran (Ram), P.E.  
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## Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Thomas J. Jasien



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary, Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

On behalf of the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, I am writing to express my support for the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) operates bus, light rail, bus rapid transit, HOV and HOT lanes and paratransit service in the Houston area. Because transportation is our business, we work hand-in-hand with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on highway projects daily. The NHHIP is one of these projects. In addition, our main METRO office is located in downtown Houston adjacent to NHHIP Segment 3. TxDOT is currently planning and designing stages to update this Segment; METRO representatives have been in meetings and discussions about these plans for many years.

The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the EaDo Cap. The Cap will form an inviting open, programmed green space and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to our nearby diverse communities of EaDo. In addition, the physical reconnection of EaDo has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway.

If funded, the Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed.

I welcome your favorable consideration of this application and thank you for your continuing support for critical transportation investments across the country.

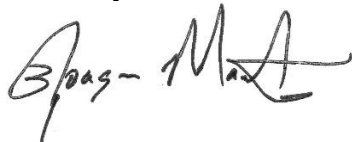
Sincerely,

Thomas J. Jasien  
Deputy CEO



Approval of this application will be appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact my chief of staff, Edith Santamaria at [edith.santamaria@houstontx.gov](mailto:edith.santamaria@houstontx.gov). Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joaquin Martinez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Councilman Joaquin Martinez  
Houston City Council – District I



February 26, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

The East Downtown Management District (EDMD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

East Downtown is nestled in a pocket of Houston's urban fabric, and the management district facilitates quality planning across our neighborhood to support public safety, economic growth, and community cohesion. Our neighborhood features award-winning restaurants, hundreds of small businesses, and a 20,000+ soccer-specific stadium that is home to two professional teams and frequently hosts international matches. The EaDo Cap Connector will enhance our connectivity to the Downtown and support continued growth of East Downtown as a central hub of activity within the Houston region.

Key segments of the NHHIP's footprint are within EDMD's boundaries. The proposed EaDo Cap requires a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the EaDo Cap. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, attainable housing, and transit-oriented development. If this application is successful, we commit to collaborating with the Downtown District, the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners on this much-needed feasibility/planning study of the Cap.

Please contact Elizabeth Whitton, Executive Director ([elizabeth@eadohouston.com](mailto:elizabeth@eadohouston.com)) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shahin Naghavi".

Shahin Naghavi  
 Chairman, Board of Directors  
 East Downtown Houston Management District



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

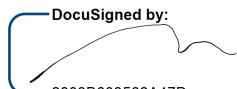
This letter is written to support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, parts of which border the area served by MRA and MMD. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the East Downtown, "EaDo," Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect because of the physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed the Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Matt Thibodeaux, Executive Director, if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  


2803B603562A47D...  
**Matt Thibodeaux**  
Executive Director  
Midtown Redevelopment Authority

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# FIFTH WARD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

## TIRZ#18

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February 19, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone 18/Fifth Ward Redevelopment Authority and Houston's Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment is the embodiment of a strong and productive public/private partnership that aims to respond to the needs of community, improve the quality of life for residents, and accelerate the comprehensive redevelopment of 5<sup>th</sup> Ward (east of Downtown Houston) This letter is written to support the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDO) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Our entities represent a strategic and performance-based partnership, designed to steward sustained investments and other resources into the community for public benefit. We equally strive to create and enhance a positive sense of place through destination points and transformative projects that build capacity of the residents and businesses. We implement programs that reduce barriers to success, mitigate disparities, and eliminate inequitable systemic issues--in turn, creating opportunity for economic growth, a healthier and attractive community, and fostering an environment that supports the vision of being a *Community of Choice*-- A great place to *Live, Work, Invest, Be Educated, Worship, & Play!*

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, parts of which border the area served by our TIRZ and CRC. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the EaDo, Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City’s urban core.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will support economic mobility and improve transportation in and around the neighboring communities like Fifth Ward, east of Downtown. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed, the Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed sixty years ago.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Kathy Flanagan Payton, [kpayton@fifthwardcrc.org](mailto:kpayton@fifthwardcrc.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,



Harvey Clemons, Jr. Chairman

Fifth Ward Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone



Kathy Flanagan Payton, Pres/CEO

Fifth Ward Community  
Redevelopment Corporation



## OST/Alameda Corridors Redevelopment Authority - TIRZ #7

3131 Emancipation Avenue, Suite 225 • Houston, Texas 77004 • [www.ostalmeda.com](http://www.ostalmeda.com)

Phone: 713-522-5154 • Fax: 713-522-1105 • [tir7@ostalmeda.com](mailto:tir7@ostalmeda.com)

### **Board of Directors:**

February 16, 2024

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Board Member

**Executive Director**  
*Theola Petteway*

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

RE: Support of Houston Downtown District's RAISE Application for East  
Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project  
Segment 3

On behalf of the OST/Alameda Corridors Redevelopment Authority (the OST/Alameda Authority), I submit this letter of support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The OST/Alameda Authority, a local government corporation of the City of Houston which administers Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Number Seven (TIRZ #7), was established in 1998 to support the redevelopment of historically African-American, inner-city communities adjacent to East Downtown and Downtown Houston.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, which includes parts of TIRZ #7. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing updates to NHHIP Segment 3. The design is part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With decades of community engagement, the Houston Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting, open, programmed green space, the East Downtown, "EaDo," Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a major impact on the City of Houston by physically reconnecting Downtown Houston and East Downtown. It will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Eado Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed the Eado Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

We wholeheartedly support Houston Downtown District's RAISE Application and urge the U.S. Department of Transportation to fund this request for a much-needed project.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please, contact me ([tdpetteway@ostalmeda.com](mailto:tdpetteway@ostalmeda.com)) or Floyd Smith ([fmith@ostalmeda.com](mailto:fmith@ostalmeda.com)), Director of Operations.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Theola Petteway", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Theola Petteway  
Executive Director

Greater Southeast Management District | 5445 Almeda Road, Suite #503, Houston, TX 77004  
 P: 713.942.0500 | E: [programs@houstonse.org](mailto:programs@houstonse.org)



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

The Greater Southeast Management District, geographically branded as Houston Southeast formally submits this letter of support for the (Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Houston Southeast spans from the Texas Medical Center to the University of Houston at Spur 5 and offers connectivity to some of our city's most visited destinations and cultural experiences. The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, parts of which border the area served by our TIRZ. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With its decades of history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort to provide an inviting open, programmed green space, the East Downtown, "EaDo," Cap. It will cover the trenched section of the highway, providing connectivity for the diverse communities of EaDo and the City's urban core.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect because greenspaces that improve quality of life, while improving the connectivity are critical to the future of our city. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies. As designed the Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Nikki Knight ([nknight@houstonse.org](mailto:nknight@houstonse.org)) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerry Davis  
 General Manager Houston Southeast

cc: Brian Smith, Chairman  
 Abdul-Haleem Muhammad, Vice Chairman and Transportation and Local Mobility Chair  
 Nikki Knight, District Program Manager





## Greater Northside Management District

615 North Loop East, Suite 104, Houston, Texas 77022

(713) 229-0900 office

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary, Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

As Executive Director of Greater Northside Management District, a district just North of Downtown, I am glad to write this letter in support for the Houston Downtown Management District (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Greater Northside Management District works to enhance the district and increase economic activity for the commercial property owners, and businesses. We also work on attracting additional investment, both public and private funds for investment to improve infrastructure and amenities in the district. With the proximity Greater Northside to downtown we are invested in the success of the NHHIP reconstruction and the success of proposed Caps that are being proposed, including one in the district.

The NHHIP reconstruction is focused on Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 69. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages to update NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative and equity-focused planning effort for the EaDo Cap with decades of history of ongoing community engagement to provide an inviting, open, and programmed green space. As designed, the Cap will connect the urban fabric of a neighborhood that was once divided when the interstate was originally constructed.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect because as we hope for Segment 2 proposed Cap, it has the potential to reconnect two neighborhoods, potentially providing needed green space in an urban area. We see that this also has the possibility of spurring surrounding development and provide a destination place. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur mixed-use development, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development, directly benefiting low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies.



## Greater Northside Management District

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615 North Loop East, Suite 104, Houston, Texas 77022

(713) 229-0900 office

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Rebecca Reyna, Executive Director, [rc.reyna@greaternorthsidedistrict.org](mailto:rc.reyna@greaternorthsidedistrict.org), if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca C. Reyna*

Rebecca Reyna  
Executive Director  
Greater Northside Management





February 28, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District RAISE Application for East  
 Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

I am Carme Williams, representing the Greater Houston Black Chamber of Commerce (GHBC), and I am reaching out to express our support for the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. Specifically, we are endorsing the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Established in 1935 as Houston's first African American civic organization, the GHBC is dedicated to cultivating a diverse membership that mirrors the city's rich cultural tapestry. Our organization is committed to providing financial support and volunteer resources to empower our community. The GHBC's vision is to be the premier resource for business development and community engagement within Houston's African American population.

The NHHIP reconstruction initiative targets Interstate Highways 45, 10, and 59, encompassing a region where many of our members' businesses are located. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently in the planning and design phases to modernize NHHIP Segment 3. This design process is part of a collaborative endeavor involving the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. Given the Downtown District's extensive history of community involvement, they are spearheading a comprehensive planning approach that prioritizes collaboration and equity. Their aim is to create an inclusive and welcoming public space that fosters progress and connectivity for all stakeholders involved. We believe that supporting the Downtown District's grant application for the NHHIP Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan aligns with our shared goals of promoting sustainable infrastructure development and equitable community growth. We are confident that this project will benefit not only our members but also the broader Houston community.

Greater Houston Black Chamber's Letter to  
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
2/28/2024  
Page 2 of 2

Thank you for considering our endorsement of this important initiative. Should you require any further information or support from the GHBC, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

*Carme Williams/NR*

Carme Williams, Chair

Greater Houston Black Chamber of Commerce

4828 Loop Central Drive

10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 1000

Houston, TX 77081

Phone: (713) 660-8299

Email: [info@ghbcc.com](mailto:info@ghbcc.com)

Website: [www.ghbcc.com](http://www.ghbcc.com)



The Leader of Houston's New Majority®

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**Chair**  
**Scott Silvas**  
*Fifth Third Bank*

**Past Chair**  
**Mely Jimenez**  
*Today's Business Solutions*

**Chair-Elect**  
**Luis Silva**  
*AT&T*

**Treasurer**  
**Carlos Abello**  
*Vedado Corporation*

**Directors**

**Morena Arredondo**  
*Atkins Global*

**Roberto Contreras IV**  
*Houston EB5*

**Jose Espiñel**  
*Comcast*

**Laura Urquiza Gump**  
*Kroger*

**President & CEO**  
**Dr. Laura Murillo**

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

On behalf of the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, we are writing this letter in support of the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The Downtown District will use the grant for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is the leading advocate for Hispanic business and civic interests in the Greater Houston area. Through its issue advocacy, its media platforms with an audience reach of more than 3 million people, and its robust membership network, the Chamber is the leading united voice for its members and all of Hispanic Houston.

The NHHIP is focused on reconstructing Interstate Highways 45, and 59, parts of which border the downtown area in which the HHCC is located. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages of Segment 3 of the NHHIP bordering downtown Houston. The Downtown District, following years of collaboration, is advancing planning and design of a thirty-acre connector – the EaDo Cap – stretching across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown. The Downtown District will undertake a community-based planning and design program to realize an equitable outcome for the EaDo Cap that will connect the urban fabric of neighborhoods formerly divided by the interstate's original construction.

The creation of the EaDo Cap will have a positive effect because our business community is in dire need of improved infrastructure. The physical reconnection of East Downtown with the urban core of Houston will spur economic opportunities for our membership and directly benefit nearby low-income and disadvantaged communities. If funded, Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study of the Cap with innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Dr. Laura Murillo, President & CEO at [lmurillo@houstonhispanicchamber.com](mailto:lmurillo@houstonhispanicchamber.com) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laura Murillo  
President & CEO  
Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

*The Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is a tax exempt organization under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions or gifts to the HHCC are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes. However, a portion of your payment to the HHCC may be deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense. Please consult your own tax advisor with respect to your eligibility to take such deductions.*

[houstonhispanicchamber.com](http://houstonhispanicchamber.com)

1801 Main Street, Suite 890  
Houston, TX 77002

(713) 644-7070



**Houston Astros LLC**  
 P.O. Box 288  
 Houston, Texas 77001-0288  
 Ph: 713.259.8000  
 Fax: 713.259.8909  
 www.astros.com

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

My name is Jim Crane. I am the owner and Chairman of the Houston Astros. I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Houston Astros strive to deliver memorable fan experiences, be a great place to work and to make Houston proud. Our team has won two world Series titles (2017 and 2022) and seven pennants (one in the National League and six in the American League). Our home site is Minute Maid Park which is located in downtown Houston near Interstate Highways 59 and 45 and due east of NHHIP Segment 3. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is currently planning and designing stages to update this Segment. We have attended meetings and been provided information related to the planning and design of this Segment for over a decade.

The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the East Downtown, "EaDo" Cap. The Cap will form an inviting open planned green space near our stadium and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to our nearby diverse communities of EaDo.

In addition, the physical reconnection of East Downtown has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway. (TIE-IN to Minute Maid Park access)

If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and

environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed.

Please contact Giles Kibbe at [gkibbe@astros.com](mailto:gkibbe@astros.com) with any questions you may have for us. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James R. Crane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

James R. Crane  
Owner and Chairman, Houston Astros



February 18, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

I am writing on behalf of the Houston Dynamo Football Club, a multi-faceted organization that includes the Houston Dash of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and Houston Dynamo FC of Major League Soccer (MLS). The NWSL and MLS are top-flight professional soccer leagues featuring many of the best players from around the world. The Dash began play in 2014 for the start of the league's second season and captured its first league title with the 2020 NWSL Challenge Cup. Houston Dynamo FC has won two MLS Cup championships, two Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cups and four conference championships in its first 17 seasons. Both teams play in Shell Energy Stadium which is located east of downtown Houston near Interstate Highways 59 and the planned Interstate 45, three blocks away from the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP), Segment 3.

I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is currently planning and designing stages to update this Segment. We have attended meetings and been provided information related to the planning and design of this Segment for some time.

The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the East Downtown, "EaDo" Cap. The Cap will form an inviting open planned green space near our soccer venue and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to our nearby diverse communities of EaDo. The physical reconnection will provide direct connectivity of our soccer stadium with the central core of the city. The Cap has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway.

If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed.

Please contact me via email at [JONeill@HoustonDynamo.com](mailto:JONeill@HoustonDynamo.com) with any questions that you may have for us. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica O'Neill".

Jessica O'Neill  
 President of Business Operations  
 Houston Dynamo Football Club





February 28, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing on behalf of the Houston Rockets to express our support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 RAISE grant application for the NHHIP Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan referenced above.

As a member team of the National Basketball Association (NBA), the Houston Rockets have been an integral part of the City of Houston for over fifty years. Our home arena, Toyota Center, is situated in downtown Houston, due west of NHHIP Segment 3 and serves as a focal point for entertainment and community engagement. However, the current Houston freeway system separates Toyota Center from nearby communities in East Downtown, known locally as "EaDo."

The Downtown District's initiative to create the EaDo Cap presents an exciting opportunity to transform the area surrounding our arena into a vibrant and accessible green space that will reconnect downtown and Toyota Center with the diverse communities of EaDo. If funded, the Downtown Houston+ District, in collaboration with key stakeholders, will conduct a feasibility and planning study seeking innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies to repair the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed. We have attended meetings and reviewed information related to the planning and design of this Segment for over a decade, and we strongly support this initiative.

Please contact Gretchen Sheirr, President of Business Operations, with any questions you may have for us. She can be reached via email at [gretchens@rocketball.com](mailto:gretchens@rocketball.com) or by phone at 713-758-7383. We appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tilman Fertitta  
Chairman and CEO  
Fertitta Entertainment  
Houston Rockets and Toyota Center



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
 U.S. Department of Transportation  
 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
 Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Greater Houston Partnership, representing the business community of the 12-county greater Houston region, I am writing to express our support for the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

The Greater Houston Partnership is a gathering place for community-minded business leaders who want to be involved in Houston's positive growth. Through the dedicated efforts of our 900 member companies, the Partnership strives to make the region the best place to live, work, and build a business. Our office is in the Partnership Tower, located in downtown Houston adjacent to Segment 3, Interstate Highway 59 and the proposed new Interstate 45 travel lanes. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is currently in the planning and design stages to update this Segment. Partnership members have attended meetings, provided public comment, and been prepared for the planning and design of this Segment for over a decade.

The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the East Downtown (EaDo) Cap. The Cap will form an inviting open, planned green space and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to our nearby diverse communities of EaDo. In addition, the physical reconnection of EaDo has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway. The enhancements are an opportunity for equity, providing comfort connections and access to world-class activities in downtown rivaling the new greenspace plots located on the west side of town.

If funded, the Downtown District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and re-connect the urban fabric that was divided when the interstate was constructed.

Please contact Taylor Landin, Executive Vice President, and Chief Policy Officer at [tlandin@houston.org](mailto:tlandin@houston.org) with any questions you may have for us. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Kean', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Steve Kean  
 President and CEO

[www.houston.org](http://www.houston.org)

701 Avenida de las Americas, Suite 900 | Houston, TX 77010

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Appendix A



February 19, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Houston First Corporation (HFC), the destination marketing organization for Houston and the operator of several city facilities, I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

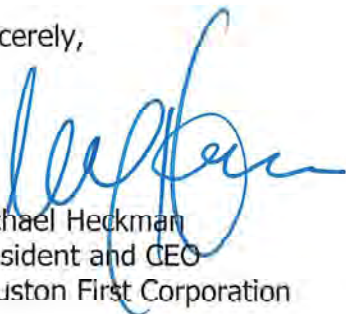
HFC is a local government corporation with responsibilities that include promotion of Houston domestically and internationally. Our operations also include the day-to-day management of the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) and the surrounding district as well as other city-owned venues. The GRB borders the western edge of the NHHIP Segment 3 and we have been involved in meetings for planning and design for over a decade.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is currently in planning and designing stages to update this Segment; it is being done as part of a coordinated effort with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. With a long history of community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the East Downtown, "EaDo" Cap. The Cap will form an inviting, open-planned green space immediately adjacent to the GRB and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to nearby diverse communities in EaDo. This dovetails with our own plan to transform the convention center district for a new generation, opening the building to the east with additional entrances and integrating the facility more seamlessly with the surrounding neighborhoods. We believe the redesigned GRB, in conjunction with the Cap, will help reconnect Downtown with EaDo and bring communities together.

In addition, the physical reconnection of East Downtown has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway, from the ongoing redevelopment of EaDo to new entertainment districts in Downtown. The NHHIP plan will promote long-term, equitable, and inclusive economic development opportunities that will have significant local and regional impacts. We understand that if this project is funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies to restitch the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed.

Thank you for considering this important project for Houston's future and the betterment of our communities. Should you have questions or require any further information, please contact Luther Villagomez, Chief Operating Officer, at 713-853-8036, or John Gonzalez, Senior Vice President & General Manager, at 713-853-8229.

Sincerely,



Michael Heckman  
President and CEO  
Houston First Corporation



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Bob Phillips  
F. Max Schuette\*  
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Jeff Taylor  
Georgia Wilson

\*deceased

President

Anne Olson

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District's RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

On behalf of the Houston non-profit Buffalo Bayou Partnership, I am pleased to submit this letter in support of the Houston Downtown Management District's (Downtown District) FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The Downtown District will use the grant for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown (EaDo) Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Buffalo Bayou Partnership creates and stewards welcoming parks, trails and unique spaces, connecting Houstonians with our city's most historic natural waterway. For more than 35 years, the organization has been revitalizing Buffalo Bayou through strong public-private partnerships that include a multitude of governmental agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals. (One of our long-time partners has been the Houston Downtown Management District.) Currently, our organization is focused on a four-mile stretch of the waterway east of downtown -- from US 59 to Lockwood Drive in Houston's East End. The western most edge of this project has close proximity to the EaDo Cap.

The NHHIP is focused on reconstructing Interstate Highways 10, 45, and 59, segments of which encircle downtown Houston. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office is currently planning and designing stages of Segment 3 of the NHHIP bordering downtown Houston. The Downtown District, following years of collaboration, is advancing planning and design of a thirty-acre connector – the EaDo Cap – stretching across the NHHIP-designed below-grade highway along the eastern edge of Downtown. The Downtown District will undertake a community-based planning and design program to realize an equitable outcome for the EaDo Cap, one that will connect the urban fabric of diverse neighborhoods formerly divided by the interstate's original construction. Connections are at the heart of Buffalo Bayou Partnership's work. Our current efforts are focused on linking trails and parks in the downtown area eastward and eventually, all the way to the Port of Houston Turning Basin. In doing our

work, we rely on other civic and planning organizations to augment the connectivity work we are doing with their own projects. The Downtown District's EaDO cap is an example of one such project.

Buffalo Bayou Partnership has a long-standing commitment to engaging the community and strengthening under resourced neighborhoods. Some of the same neighborhoods we are working in will benefit from the economic development stimulated by the EaDo Cap. The physical reconnection of East Downtown will spur economic and cultural development and directly benefit nearby disadvantaged communities. The grant will permit the Downtown District to engage the community in planning and designing innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies for the EaDo Cap.

Approval of this application will be appreciated. Please contact Anne Olson, President at [aolson@buffalobayou.org](mailto:aolson@buffalobayou.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,



Anne Olson  
President



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February 19, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown District RAISE Application for East Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

Discovery Green Conservancy in support of Downtown Houston Plus. I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown Cap Park Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Discovery Green Conservancy's mission is to provide an uncommonly beautiful, urban green space in the heart of Houston that serves as a village green for our city, a source of health and happiness for our citizens, and a window into the incredible diversity of arts and traditions that enrich life in Houston. As the largest downtown public park in Houston, we have a vested interest in the health of this area and how public spaces are protected.

The Downtown District is advancing a collaborative effort to create the East Downtown, "EaDo" Cap. The Cap will form an inviting open planned green space near our park and cover the trenched section of the highway, connecting us to our nearby diverse communities of EaDo. In addition, the physical reconnection of East Downtown has the potential to catalyze and optimize other efforts currently underway.

If funded, Downtown Houston+, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to add innovative and environmentally sustainable strategies and connect the urban fabric divided when the interstate was constructed.

Please contact Kathryn Lott, President and Park Director at [Kathryn@discoverygreen.com](mailto:Kathryn@discoverygreen.com), with any questions you may have for us. Thank you for your assistance and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Lott  
President and Park Director



777 Preston Street Unit 27D  
Houston, Tx. 77002  
346-323-7155

February 24, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

**RE: Support of Houston Downtown Management District RAISE Application for East-Downtown Cap Plan Study for North Houston Highway Improvement Project Segment 3**

I am writing to express my support for the Downtown Houston+ District's FY 2024 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3 East Downtown "EaDo" Cap Feasibility Study and Conceptual Master Plan.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District Office solicits input in the planning and design stages for the reconstruction of NHHIP Segment 3. The design is being done as part of an ongoing coordination effort in lockstep with the City of Houston and the TxDOT Houston District Office. Based on its community engagement, the Downtown District is advancing a plan for an inviting open area called the EaDo Cap over the trenched section of the highway. Our

As a business owner and resident in downtown Houston for many years, I have watched the changes caused by the increase in the number of vehicles in the area. The physical



reconnection of East Downtown will help because we are a transportation and tour company in the downtown and EaDo areas. This would allow us to connect people with both sides of the downtown area and show off even more of our beautiful city. The Cap will remedy the separations created decades ago as highways diminished the quality of life in connected communities.

If funded, the Houston Downtown Management District, with the City of Houston, TxDOT, and other key community partners, will perform a feasibility/planning study to address these concerns.

I support the planning for the Cap and ask that the application be approved. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robby Robertson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robby Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

President/CEO

Joyride Houston

## **Appendix B**

### Cost Estimate

## EADO CAP CONNECTOR MASTER PLAN AND FEASIBILITY STUDY - COST BREAKDOWN

SWA

2/22/2024

PROJECT PHASE	Duration	Fee
STEP 1 - PROJECT FRAMEWORK	2 months	\$ 175,000.00
STEP 2 - ANALYSIS AND PROGRAMMING	3 months	\$ 325,000.00
STEP 3 - PROJECT SCENARIOS	5 months	\$ 450,000.00
STEP 4 - FINAL MASTER PLAN	5 months	\$ 550,000.00
<b>FEE TOTAL</b>	15 months	<b>\$ 1,500,000.00</b>

### Master Plan and Feasibility Study Project Consultant Team

Landscape Architecture / Urban Design  
 Architecture  
 Civil Engineering  
 Low Impact Development / Sustainability  
 Structural Engineering  
 MEP Engineering  
 Architecture  
 Mobility Systems  
 Cost Estimating  
 Public Engagement  
 Cultural / Community Historian  
 Ecological / Environmental Systems  
 Economic Development / Inclusive Cities  
 Cost Benefit Analysis  
 Operations + Maintenance

## EADO CAP CONNECTOR DETAIL DESIGN AND ENGINEERING - COST BREAKDOWN

SWA

2/22/2024

PROJECT PHASE	Fee
30% SCHEMATIC DESIGN	\$ 4,050,000.00
60% DESIGN DEVELOPMENT	\$ 4,050,000.00
90% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS	\$ 4,050,000.00
PROJECT APPROVALS / PERMITTING	\$ 675,000.00
100% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS	\$ 675,000.00
<b>FEE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 13,500,000.00</b>

*Note: Fee Total includes escalation over an assumed 5 year period. Construction Phase Services would be provided under a separate agreement.*

<b>Detail Design and Engineering Project Consultant Team</b>		
Landscape Architecture		
Architecture		
Civil		
MEP		
Structural		
Lighting Design		
Graphics and Wayfinding		
Geotech		
Irrigation		
Mobility		
IT/Security		
Water Feature MEP		
Playground Safety Consultant		
Soils		
Cultural / Public Art		
Programming		
Public Engagement		
<b>TOTAL PROJECT FEES</b>		
EADO CAP CONNECTOR MASTER PLAN AND FEASIBILITY STUDY	\$	1,500,000.00
EADO CAP CONNECTOR DESIGN AND ENGINEERING	\$	13,500,000.00
<b>Total Master Plan + Detail Design</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>15,000,000.00</b>
<b>% of \$250 million total estimated project cost</b>		<b>6%</b>

## **Appendix C**

### Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA)

## VOLUNTARY RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

### I. Purpose and Background

This Voluntary Resolution Agreement (Agreement) is entered into by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to resolve the FHWA investigation of TxDOT regarding the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (Project) under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d to 2000d-7 (Title VI) by setting forth specific mitigation actions for the Project. These actions will ensure that TxDOT carries out the Project consistent with the requirements of Title VI.

FHWA investigated TxDOT's compliance with Title VI and the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Title VI regulations, at Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), Part 21, in response to administrative complaints filed by the following individuals or entities: 1) Air Alliance Houston on January 18, 2021 (DOT Complaint No. 2021-0092); 2) Texas Housers on January 26, 2021 (DOT Complaint No. 2021-0095); 3) Modesti Cooper on February 28, 2021 (DOT Complaint No. 2021-0103); and 4) by Harris County on October 8, 2021 (DOT Complaint No. 2021-0250). The complaints alleged the Project would result in race, color, or national origin discrimination against multiple communities in the Project area in violation of Title VI. The complaints also alleged that the public participation process for the Project discriminated against individuals on the basis of race and national origin.

FHWA initiated its investigation in March 2021. TxDOT completed the environmental clearance process for the Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on February 3, 2021. To preserve the status quo during the course of its investigation, FHWA requested that TxDOT pause contract letting, property acquisition, and final design work, and TxDOT complied.

From April 2021 to March 2022, FHWA sent three Requests for Information to TxDOT, in response to which TxDOT provided nearly 9,000 documents, along with access to hundreds of additional documents. In addition to these documents, FHWA reviewed thousands of pages of publicly available documents developed through the NEPA process. Over the course of two site visits to Houston, FHWA conducted approximately 100 in-person interviews and 20 virtual interviews with members of the community affected by the Project, in addition to numerous interviews with TxDOT staff.

In accordance with DOT's Title VI regulations, FHWA entered into discussions with TxDOT in 2022 focused on reaching a voluntary resolution agreement on the concerns raised in the Title VI complaints. This Agreement is a result of those negotiations.

### II. Title VI Jurisdiction

Title VI provides that “[n]o person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal

financial assistance.” 42 U.S.C. §2000d. Title VI’s prohibition against national origin discrimination requires that recipients of federal funds take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). DOT’s Title VI regulations at 49 C.F.R. Part 21 provide that recipients may not, directly or through contractual or other arrangements, utilize criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting persons to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin, or have the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of the program with respect to individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin. TxDOT is a recipient of Federal financial assistance from the FHWA, and the Project includes Federal financial assistance. DOT has jurisdiction over TxDOT under Title VI and its Title VI regulations because TxDOT receives federal financial assistance from DOT. As a recipient, TxDOT must comply with Title VI in its programs and activities, which include not only this Project, but also “all of the operations of” TxDOT. 42 U.S.C. §2000d-4a.

### **III. General Terms**

1. This Agreement, and all provisions and Exhibits herein, are between TxDOT and FHWA as the sole parties to the Agreement. This Agreement will be applicable to, and binding upon, the parties to this Agreement, their officers, agents, employees, assignees, and successors in office. The FHWA Texas Division Office has been delegated responsibility for leading the oversight and implementation of this agreement.
2. The provisions and Exhibits herein constitute the entire Agreement.
3. If any part of the Agreement is deemed invalid, all other provisions remain valid.
4. The signatories represent that they are authorized to bind TxDOT and FHWA.
5. By signing this Agreement, TxDOT does not admit that any Title VI violation has occurred and voluntarily agrees to implement these actions.
6. This Agreement resolves this Title VI investigation and is limited to the facts and issues presented in the complaints identified during this investigation. This Agreement does not affect TxDOT’s continuing obligation to comply with Title VI, and all other federal laws and applicable regulations, or preclude FHWA from taking appropriate action to evaluate TxDOT’s compliance with any laws enforced by FHWA.
7. Neither TxDOT nor any entity or business party to an agreement to carry out the actions herein shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Section 601 of Title VI or 49 C.F.R. Part 21, or because they have made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing pursuant to Title VI . 49 C.F.R. § 21.11(e).
8. The term of this Agreement (Term) shall commence on the date that both parties sign this Agreement (Effective Date).

9. This Agreement shall terminate after the date that all terms in Article IV have been completed, except that Articles VIII and IX will survive the termination of this Agreement as necessary to effectuate their intent. If the Project is terminated, this agreement will cease to be effective. Should the project be suspended due to funding or legal action, the actions required in this Agreement are suspended during the time of the Project suspension, with the exception of those actions in Article IV.2.a (compliance with Uniform Act); Article IV.2.f (Affordable Housing initiatives); Article IV.2.l (project website); Article IV.6.k.vi (participation in Emancipation Trail feasibility study); Article IV.6.k.vii (Olivewood National Register of Historic Places); and Article IV.8.g (LEP SOP).
10. This Agreement may be modified by mutual agreement of both FHWA and TxDOT after negotiating in good faith and in writing.
11. If TxDOT is unable to comply with the initial timelines in this Agreement, then TxDOT may send FHWA a written extension request detailing the reasons for the request and the new dates requested. The new dates will become effective only if FHWA responds in writing to TxDOT accepting the request terms. FHWA may propose a counterproposal to the terms proposed by TxDOT. If TxDOT does not comply with the timelines agreed to under this Agreement and does not otherwise secure an extension request from FHWA, then FHWA may pursue potential sanctions, as discussed in Section IX of this Agreement.
12. All mitigation measures described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Record of Decision (ROD), and this Agreement mitigate impacts resulting from the Project and represent reasonable public expenditures after considering the impacts of the action and the benefits of the proposed mitigation measures. As such, the mitigation measures described in the FEIS, ROD, and this Agreement are eligible for federal reimbursement pursuant to 23 CFR §771.105(e).
13. TxDOT will cooperate in a timely manner with FHWA regarding all additional requests for information and documentation, pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 21.9, et seq.
14. Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed as creating any liability in favor of any third party or parties against FHWA or TxDOT.

#### **IV. TxDOT Actions**

As the Recipient of Federal-Aid Highway funds from FHWA, TxDOT is solely responsible for effectuating the actions described in this Agreement. Except where noted, the actions described below will be performed in addition to the mitigation actions already committed to by TxDOT, as they relate to the Project, contained within the ROD. TxDOT agrees to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in constructing all pedestrian-related elements associated with the Project.



TxDOT will perform or effectuate the following<sup>1</sup>:

**1. Reducing the NHHIP Footprint During Detailed Design**

- a) Consistent with the requirements of all state and federal law, including NEPA and Title VI, and consistent with actions established by the ROD and FEIS, TxDOT remains committed to evaluating reasonable opportunities to reduce the project footprint in ways that would not compromise the integrity and functionality of the purpose and need of the Project, as described in the ROD. TxDOT agrees that requests to reduce the Project footprint should be evaluated with a focus on the following:
  - i. Strengthening Houston's economy;
  - ii. Reducing flooding on and off the freeway;
  - iii. Making travel safer for all road users;
  - iv. Providing long-term capacity for all users of the roadway, including automobile, freight, and transit;
  - v. Serving and preserving the neighborhoods along the corridor while enhancing connectivity between neighborhoods;
  - vi. Mitigating impacts to existing parks and open space while creating additional opportunity for open space; and
  - vii. Ensuring accessible evacuation routes.
- b) TxDOT agrees to use the least amount of right-of-way as allowed and defined by law, after evaluation of the project footprint.
- c) It is important to note that any proposals to reduce the Project footprint must not compromise safety, flooding mitigation, design standards, freight mobility and evacuation effectiveness.

**2. Displacements, Relocations, Housing, and Other Community Impacts**

TxDOT is committed to minimizing residential, business, and community resource displacements due to the Project to the extent practicable, consistent with meeting the purpose and need of the Project and consistent with Title VI requirements. In addition, TxDOT recognizes the impacts of the Project on the already limited availability of affordable housing in the Project area and is committed to mitigating such impacts as set forth in the Project Record of Decision (ROD) and this VRA. TxDOT will continue to engage and inform the public about project developments

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise provided, nothing in this Agreement should be construed to be limited by the terms of the agreements between TxDOT and the City of Houston, and between TxDOT and Harris County, regarding the NHHIP.

and construction impacts as the Project moves forward and provide competent language assistance services, interpretation and translation for persons with LEP.

### Displacements

- a) TxDOT will comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4601 *et seq.*) (Uniform Act) and associated regulations at 49 CFR Part 24 throughout the course of the Project. TxDOT will include the data elements in Parts B and C of Appendix B, 49 CFR part 24, for all residential and non-residential displacements associated with the Project in the Progress Reports required by Article VI of this VRA. Additionally, for each displacement reported in the previous sentence, TxDOT will provide documentation of benefits provided in accordance with the Uniform Act. TxDOT will redact all personally identifiable information in its reports, but shall make the information available for review by FHWA upon request.
- b) Within 90 days of signing this VRA, TxDOT will complete a survey of all non-residential businesses, services, or other organizations displaced by the Project, accommodating those entities' language preferences, to confirm their receipt of relocation services under the Uniform Relocation Act. For those entities that have already relocated and respond that they did not receive relocation services or did not receive adequate relocation services, TxDOT will provide such relocation services as committed to for non-residential relocations under the NHHIP ROD within 150 days of signing this VRA. TxDOT will document progress in providing the non-residential relocation services described herein, including the number of non-residential businesses, services, or other organizations that have received such services, which services have been requested, which services have been provided, and the cost of the services provided, in the Progress Reports as required by Article VI of this VRA.
- c) With the first Progress Report under Article VI of this VRA, TxDOT will submit to FHWA a plan for how TxDOT will ensure that roadway, transit, and pedestrian/bicycle access to essential services, including but not limited to health care facilities, grocery stores, pharmacies, schools, places of worship, and voting locations, will be maintained during and after construction in neighborhoods where such essential services will be impacted by the Project. In developing the access plan, TxDOT will coordinate with local governments and community stakeholders to identify access impacts to specific types of services, effective alternative routes, and alternative resource locations nearby to ensure that the public retains use of these services.
- d) Prior to resuming acquisition and demolition activities on individual parcels, TxDOT will review the properties included in the relocation impacts identified in the FEIS and ROD. Should TxDOT determine that the proposed acquisition or demolition of that specific parcel was not included in the FEIS or ROD, prior to

proceeding with the action on the parcel, TxDOT will conduct a re-evaluation under 23 CFR 771.129(c) to determine whether a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is required. This commitment will apply to all segments of the Project. This commitment does not apply to the state-funded acquisition of any remainder that is voluntarily sold by a property owner to TxDOT pursuant to Texas Transportation Code Section 203.0521 and that will not be used in connection with the Project. TxDOT will provide information on any acquisition or demolition of a parcel that was not included in the FEIS or ROD, including state-funded acquisitions that are voluntarily sold by a property owner to TxDOT, in the Progress Reports required by Article VI of this VRA.

- e) TxDOT, during final design of each segment of the NHHIP, will evaluate changes to the Project (as compared to what was approved in the ROD) that would reduce the amount of right-of-way needed and the displacement impacts, especially with respect to multi-family housing units, while ensuring that the final design meets the project Purpose and Need as described in the ROD. TxDOT will document in the Progress Reports as required by Article VI of this VRA instances where right-of-way needs and displacements have been reduced.
- f) TxDOT committed in the ROD to providing \$27 million to support affordable housing initiatives in the neighborhoods most affected by the project in addition to the individual acquisition and relocation compensation provided to homeowners, renters and businesses that would be displaced. Through this VRA, TxDOT agrees to commit an additional \$3 million, for a total of \$30 million, to affordable housing entities to aid in the implementation of these affordable housing initiatives. TxDOT will coordinate with Houston Housing Authority (HHA) and develop an opportunity for the public to provide input on how these funds might be utilized and distributed. Following the completion of this public outreach, TxDOT will prepare a plan and a schedule for disbursement and use of the funds and provide to FHWA within 90 days of completion of the plan. As part of this plan, TxDOT will describe considerations given to the viability of a community land trust(s) as part of affordable housing mitigation. TxDOT will include a report on implementation of this paragraph in the Progress Reports required by Article VI of this VRA.
- g) TxDOT will discuss with the City of Houston (City) the use of portions of the Project's future surplus right-of-way for affordable and workforce housing as developed by third parties in potential partnership with the City, with the understanding that any surplus property must be acquired pursuant to TxDOT policy. TxDOT will include a report on implementation of this paragraph in the Progress Reports required by Article VI of this VRA.

### Relocations

- h) TxDOT will make relocation benefits available to all eligible displacees and not deny benefits in cases that would result in exceptional and extremely unusual hardship to such a displacee. TxDOT will report to FHWA in each Progress Report any displacee who is denied relocation benefits and the benefits denied.
- i) As committed to in the ROD, TxDOT will provide enhanced relocation services by conducting workshops with residential property owners and renters who would be displaced, including topics such as:
- Getting to know household members and future goals and ability to accomplish such goals;
  - Developing communications that are culture- and context-sensitive;
  - Determining needs and preferences;
  - Explaining relocation benefits in language used by household, assist with relocation interview and explain relocation schedule;
  - Providing assistance in keeping appointments with relocation service providers;
  - Supplying information on other federal and state programs offering assistance;
  - Providing counseling to minimize hardships;
  - Explaining the acquisition process;
  - Explaining the relocation process;
  - Explaining the appraisal process;
  - Providing title information and review of documents;
  - Explaining property tax & exemption impacts;
  - Providing moving resources and move planning;
  - Providing first-time homebuyer seminars;
  - Explaining escrow process and title clearing;
  - Explaining how to update voter registration information;
  - Explaining how to get social services and benefits;
  - Explaining how to select a real estate agent;
  - Explaining how to check your credit and improve your score;
  - Explaining household budgeting; and
  - Explaining household maintenance.

TxDOT will prepare a plan for offering enhanced relocation services and submit the plan to FHWA within 30 days of completion. TxDOT will document within the plan all future discussions held with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and HHA regarding enhanced relocation services provided to residents of Clayton Homes and Kelly Village. TxDOT will document progress in providing the enhanced relocation services described herein, including the number of property owners and tenants who have received such services, which services

have been requested, which services have been provided, and the cost of services provided, in the Progress Reports as required by Article VI of this VRA.

- j) TxDOT shall identify whether its planned ROW acquisition for the NHHIP will leave any residential or non-residential owners or renters outside of the Project footprint isolated or cut off from the rest of the community and assess whether it must provide relocation acquisition or assistance or advisory services pursuant to the Uniform Act and associated regulations at 49 CFR Part 24, as well as this VRA, to such owners or renters to mitigate such impacts. TxDOT shall report to FHWA in the Progress Reports required by VRA Article VI on this issue after the conclusion of each acquisition phase of the Project.

### Housing

- k) TxDOT will inform all residential and non-residential property owners of the option to enter into an Occupancy Agreement for parcels that TxDOT acquires well in advance of the start of associated project construction. The Occupancy Agreement would allow property owners an option to continue to occupy the property after it has been acquired by TxDOT while the property owner gets reestablished at their new location until such time the property needs to be prepared for the start of associated project construction.
- l) Within 30 days of this agreement, TxDOT will establish a publicly available project-specific website. The website will be maintained and updated regularly through completion of the Project. The website will provide information in English, Spanish, and all other languages for which translation has been requested at NHHIP public meetings. The website will include the following information, as it becomes available:
- Eligibility requirements for the move out stipend, rent stipend, and weatherization and energy efficiency programs;
  - Move out dates for public housing residents, and how public housing residents can claim their priority status for housing at the new Houston Housing Authority affordable housing developments;
  - How residents and businesses can communicate with TxDOT about common construction issues including the clean-up of construction debris, filing nuisance dust reports and alerting TxDOT of potential best management practice issues such as silt fencing maintenance needs;
  - Information on NHHIP-related jobs and job fairs;
  - Advance notice of specific disruptions during construction, including bus reroutes, road closures and detours, trail closures, demolitions, and late-night activity;
  - Links to local air quality status (code red days), and monitoring information produced by the project;

- Flooding mitigation plan development/implementation, including public involvement opportunities, and notice of alerts when access to depressed sections of the highways is closed in the event of a pump failure;
- Active transportation options in the project corridor;
- A link to the Emancipation National Historic Trail Study;
- School Access and the project ombudsman;
- Copies of the memoranda with the City of Houston and Harris County and periodic progress reports of the implementation of the memoranda;
- Transit access; and
- Noise barrier decision processes.

TxDOT will explore alternative ways to communicate the information provided through the website to low literacy residents, seniors, and people without internet access. This may include outreach and engagement with, among others, leaders of community organizations, places of worship, and legal service organizations to understand the effective methods to communicate website and critical information related to displacements, relocations, housing, and other community impacts.

#### Community Impacts

##### m) *Clayton Homes:*

- i. TxDOT's acquisition of Clayton Homes is being undertaken in two phases. TxDOT has completed Phase 1, which included units no longer occupied. TxDOT will not complete the acquisition of the second phase until all residents are relocated from the Phase 2 portion of the property.
- ii. In addition to the Tenant Protection Vouchers being offered by HHA, TxDOT will also offer housing relocation supplements (up to market-valued rent) to Clayton Homes residents as an alternate relocation path under the Uniform Act. This alternate path would not rely on and therefore not exhaust available voucher capacity and would be available to all displacees even if they do not qualify for HHA Tenant Protection Vouchers. Should a Clayton Homes resident choose the alternate relocation path in the interim while the Clayton replacement units are being constructed but want to exercise their first right to return to the Clayton replacement units which are intended to be voucher based, they would be eligible to do so assuming they meet the HHA Tenant Protection Vouchers criteria at the time of their return to the replacement units.
- iii. TxDOT will work with HHA to maintain active contact information for Clayton Homes displacees in order to offer the first option to move to replacement dwellings once completed.

- n) *Kelly Village*:
- i. In addition to the Tenant Protection Vouchers that would be offered by HHA, TxDOT will also offer housing relocation supplements (up to market-valued rent) to Kelly Village residents as an alternate relocation path under the Uniform Act. This alternate path would not rely on and therefore not exhaust available voucher capacity and would be available to all displacees even if they do not qualify for HHA Tenant Protection Vouchers. Should a Kelly Village resident choose the alternate relocation path in the interim while the Kelly Village replacement units are being constructed but want to exercise their first right to return to the Kelly Village replacement units which are intended to be voucher based, they would be eligible to do so assuming they meet the HHA Tenant Protection Vouchers criteria at the time of their return to the replacement units.
  - ii. TxDOT will work with HHA to maintain active contact information for Kelly Village displacees in order to offer the first option to move to replacement dwellings once completed.
- o) TxDOT will coordinate with the City of Houston and homeless services providers to develop a plan to assist in addressing the services needed by persons experiencing homelessness within the Project limits TxDOT will submit this plan to FHWA for review within 30 days of finalization of the plan to address services needed by persons experiencing homelessness.
- p) TxDOT will review the strategies in the October 2022 DOT report on “Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making” to continue to meet with stakeholders and consider public input as it proceeds through future project development phases. Additionally, TxDOT will continue to coordinate with the NHHIP Housing and Communities Focus Group to explore and define best practices, identify opportunities to leverage existing programs and resources, and develop strategies to achieve positive solutions during project implementation. TxDOT will report on what strategies they are using for considering public input in each Progress Report as required by Article VI of this VRA. To the extent necessary, FHWA will provide feedback on these strategies and work with TxDOT on improvements.
- q) TxDOT will hold public engagement meetings—consistent with the public meeting provisions, including language access provisions, in its FHWA-approved Environmental Handbook for Public Involvement—twice each calendar year in each segment while design and construction is ongoing in the segment. TxDOT will provide FHWA a list of those invited to these meetings and its methods for publicizing the meetings a week before they occur. In advance of these meetings, TxDOT will engage affected communities and provide meeting notices in English and in the most common languages spoken by individuals with LEP in the

communities. During these public meetings, TxDOT will provide the community with up-to-date information regarding the Project, informational assistance regarding the implementation of this agreement, and will provide an open forum for the community to provide feedback, raise issues, and ask questions about the Project or TxDOT's compliance with this agreement. TxDOT will include updates of public engagement meetings in the Progress Reports as required by Article VI of this VRA. These meetings will be held at times and locations that are convenient and accessible for affected communities, and TxDOT will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for persons with LEP, including the provision of language assistance services free of cost to the persons with LEP. TxDOT will consider and incorporate information provided at these meetings, as applicable, during the design and construction of the project.

### **3. Flooding**

TxDOT understands that transportation infrastructure is integrated into the overall drainage pattern of a project and its surrounding areas. A primary objective of the NHHIP is to construct a resilient highway system that functions during extreme weather events. In the event that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) publishes a subsequent version to Atlas 14 for the integration of future climate projections, TxDOT will take actions that will use such updates to inform the final design should they be published prior to completion of design activities as stated below. Another key objective is to improve the status quo by reducing flooding in the project area. TxDOT has and will continue to work closely with the City of Houston and Harris County Flood Control District to develop partnerships that will leverage the roles and responsibilities, as well as the resources, of each entity to deliver beneficial drainage improvements throughout the overall drainage system, prioritizing areas that are most vulnerable to flooding.

- a) Prior to completing final design for each segment of the NHHIP, TxDOT will use Atlas 14 rainfall data to complete drainage studies. Such drainage studies will rely on the state of practice HEC-RAS 2D model approach. In the event NOAA publishes a subsequent version to Atlas 14 to account for variations in climate conditions, TxDOT will incorporate such updates into individual NHHIP projects that have not exceeded the 30% detailed design phase.
- b) Consistent with item (a) above, TxDOT will perform a detailed drainage study for Segment 1 prior to the final design for Segment 1 and submit it to FHWA with the first Progress Report due after finalization of the study under Article VI of this VRA.
- c) Before submittal to the Texas Transportation Commission for consideration, FHWA must review and approve any and all Final Requests for Proposal for Design-Build Contract, which include the specifications that would control the design parameters once the design-build contract is executed.



- d) For any portion of the NHHIP that is delivered by design-build method, TxDOT will require design-build contractors to abide by the same drainage design criteria that TxDOT will require for design-bid-build projects, in order to reduce the latitude of design-build contractors to deviate from drainage design parameters.
- e) As may be requested by Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) and mutually agreed upon by HCFCD and TxDOT, TxDOT will transfer maintenance responsibilities of certain drainage basins and channels to HCFCD within the State's right-of-way.
- f) As may be requested by HCFCD and mutually agreed upon by HCFCD and TxDOT, TxDOT will enter into funding, design, and construction, operations, and maintenance agreements for HCFCD to build and maintain drainage basins that would have a broader regional drainage benefit and would supplement and not impair the planned NHHIP drainage improvement.
- g) Contingent upon TxDOT receiving the necessary FHWA approvals for the NHHIP and upon mutual agreement between TxDOT and the City of Houston , TxDOT will enter into an Advanced Funding Agreement with the City in which TxDOT will provide \$20 million to the City for the design and construction of the north canal project.
- h) TxDOT will fund, design and construct its alternative for the south canal. Upon mutual agreement between TxDOT and the City, TxDOT would enter into the necessary agreements to permit the City to modify TxDOT's alternative for the south canal.
- i) TxDOT will collaborate with HCFCD as the NHHIP drainage improvements are being designed so that TxDOT can accommodate future planned improvements to be implemented by HCFCD.
- j) TxDOT will collaborate with HCFCD to identify locations to evaluate the design and construction of bridges in a manner that would accommodate improvements to the drainage channel while taking upstream and downstream channel impacts into consideration.
- k) TxDOT will collaborate with HCFCD and other governmental entities for the planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance of trails on the upper banks of the bayous that are crossed by the NHHIP (*see Exhibit A*). TxDOT will design, fund and construct trails that are within the State's right of way for the NHHIP and such trails would be operated and maintained by a third-party governmental entity and would not impair the primary drainage function of the bayous.
- l) TxDOT will collaborate with HCFCD to develop a process in which one party performs a peer review of the other party's proposed drainage improvement

projects in instances where one party's drainage design interfaces and influences the other party's drainage design.

#### **4. Air Quality Mitigation**

- a) TxDOT will ensure that air monitors in each segment will begin operating one year in advance of the commencement of construction on the corresponding segment.
- b) TxDOT will provide one air monitor in each segment and will monitor for the same pollutants in Segment 1 as those as described in the FEIS and ROD for air monitors in Segments 2 and 3.
- c) TxDOT will continue to consult with the experts it has retained to assist with air monitoring and air monitor siting on an as needed basis as the air monitoring plan is implemented in each Segment.
- d) TxDOT will include a report on implementation of this paragraph in the Progress Reports required by Article VI of this VRA.

#### **5. Structural Caps**

The NHHIP recommended alternative provides for structural caps in four areas of the project. The structural caps provide an exciting opportunity for third party collaboration with TxDOT on the full integration of transportation infrastructure in an urban environment. Such collaboration allows for the development of partnerships between TxDOT, governmental entities and stakeholders and anticipates the creation of new spaces for community gathering and recreational use.

- a) TxDOT will design and construct a structural cap along the following:
  - i. IH 69 that is located to be centered on and carrying both the METRO light rail Red Line and Fannin Street over the interstate main lanes;
  - ii. IH 69 that is located to be centered on and carrying both Caroline Street and Wheeler Avenue, including their intersection over the interstate main lanes;
  - iii. The parallel alignments of IH 69 and IH 45 that is bounded by Lamar Street and Commerce Street and carrying Lamar Street, McKinney Street, Walker Street, Rusk Street, Capitol Street, METRO's Purple and Green Lines, Texas Avenue, Preston Street, Congress Street, Franklin Street and Commerce Street over the main lanes of both interstates and, New Hamilton Street over the IH 69 southbound main lanes and IH 45 southbound main lanes; and
  - iv. IH 45 that is located to be centered on and carrying North Main Street, the southbound frontage road and the northbound frontage road over the interstate main lanes and managed lanes.
- b) During design, TxDOT will consult with:

- i. METRO to integrate existing and planned transit across and surrounding each cap; and
  - ii. The City for bicycle and pedestrian transportation across each cap.
- c) TxDOT will fund the design, construction, operations and maintenance of the following elements of the structural caps as described in item (a):
- i. Foundations for the structural caps to support the structural capacity needed to carry the roads and light rail facilities;
  - ii. The beams that provide the structural capacity needed to carry the roads and light rail facilities;
  - iii. The drainage elements that meet the applicable drainage criteria to convey stormwater runoff for the roads, light rail facilities, and interstates;
  - iv. The applicable ventilation system for the interstates; and
  - v. The applicable interior lighting and, fire and life safety systems for the interstates.
- d) In instances where a third party proposes to fund the design, construction, operations and maintenance of amenities to be integrated into the structural caps as described in item (a), TxDOT will collaborate with such third party by analyzing and providing the baseline structural loading calculations of the applicable elements in item (c) that could accommodate proposed third-party amenities without modification to the applicable elements in item (c).
- e) In instances where a third party proposes to fund the design, construction, operations and maintenance of amenities to be integrated into the structural caps as described in item (a), TxDOT will collaborate with such third party by analyzing and determining the additional amount of structural load calculations beyond the baseline calculations for the applicable elements in item (c) that would be needed to accommodate proposed third-party amenities.
- f) In instances where a third party proposes to fund the design, construction, operations and maintenance of amenities to be integrated into the structural caps as described in item (a) that exceed the baseline structural load calculations of any element in item (c), TxDOT will collaborate with such third party to determine the design, construction, maintenance and operation cost increase calculations necessary to modify the applicable baseline elements in item (c) to handle the additional amount of structural loads as calculated in item (e). Such design, construction, maintenance and operation cost increases would be third-party funded.

- g) TxDOT will establish a work group with other governmental entities to explore federal funding sources that would be eligible for third party design and construction of amenities to be integrated with the proposed structural caps.
- h) TxDOT will assist in identifying federal funding grant opportunities or other sources and required non-state match funding to design and construct open space amenities to be integrated with the proposed structural caps.
- i) TxDOT will provide engineering assistance for third party development of amenities to be integrated with the proposed structural caps.
- j) Upon mutual agreement, TxDOT will enter into agreements with other governmental entities for TxDOT to incorporate into its construction plans the design of third-party funded amenities that may be integrated into the proposed structural caps either with or after the completion of the accompanying interstate project.
- k) Upon mutual agreement, TxDOT will enter into agreements with other governmental entities for their operations and maintenance of amenities that may be integrated into the proposed structural caps either with or after the completion of the accompanying interstate project.

## **6. Parks, Open Space, Trails, and Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

The NHHIP provides a once in lifetime opportunity to expand facilities for active transportation. Through close coordination with local agencies and stakeholders, the project will add trails and increase space for off-street pedestrian and cyclist paths within the project limits. These project elements improve the safety of active transportation users.

- a) TxDOT will provide design resources to assist third parties in the development of a map of potential new trail links within both the existing right-of-way and proposed right-of-way and connections terminating outside the state's proposed right-of-way.
- b) To the extent feasible, TxDOT will design the NHHIP to accommodate the City of Houston's bike plan ([Implementation – Houston Bikeways \(houstonbikeplan.org\)](https://www.houstonbikeplan.org)).
- c) TxDOT will fund, design, and construct new trails that are feasible within the state's right-of-way for the NHHIP. Upon mutual agreement, TxDOT will enter into agreements with a third party for the third party to maintain and operate such trails.
- d) TxDOT will work with third parties to identify funding to design and construct trail links outside of the state's right-of-way.

- e) TxDOT will reconnect Andrew Street over the proposed Downtown Connectors in Fourth Ward on the west side of downtown. The Andrew Street reconnection will be a pedestrian-bike only crossing.
- f) TxDOT has determined that maintaining the Cleburne Street connection across I-69 in Third Ward is feasible and will seek stakeholder and public input to retain this connection as part of the NHHIP.
- g) TxDOT will fund, design and construct a combination of a buffer and pedestrian sidewalk and bike path, commonly referred to as the pedestrian-bike realm, on all local streets that cross either over or under a highway facility of the NHHIP.
- h) Upon mutual agreement with the Houston Housing Authority, TxDOT will address the mitigation for the loss of open space resulting from the partial acquisition of Kelly Village. TxDOT commits to a 1:1 replacement of open space area within the remaining Kelly Village property and will replace all recreational facilities and elements located within the open space area that will be impacted by the Project.
- i) In conjunction with its commitment to supporting affordable housing initiatives as described in Article IV.2.f, TxDOT commits to provide \$1.5 million to the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department for the development or rehabilitation of park facilities and amenities in City parks located in the vicinity of the project. Prior to the City's use of the committed funds, TxDOT will coordinate with the City of Houston to seek public input on how best to allocate and apply the committed funds. After obtaining such public input, the City must request and obtain concurrence from TxDOT before implementing any resulting projects.
- j) TxDOT will evaluate potential alternative pedestrian/bicycle routes to address the loss of the existing North Street bridge crossing over IH 45 between Greater Heights and Near Northside. TxDOT will provide this evaluation to FHWA in the next Progress Report after the evaluation is completed.
- k) The Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act, sponsored by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and passed in January 2020, amended the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(c)) by adding the Emancipation National Historic Trail (Emancipation Trail).<sup>2</sup> The proposed Emancipation Trail "extend[s] approximately 51 miles from the Osterman Building and Reedy Chapel in Galveston, Texas, along Texas State Highway 3 and Interstate Highway 45 North, to Freedmen's Town, then to Independence Heights and Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas, following the migration route taken by newly freed slaves and other persons of African descent from the major 19th century seaport

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<sup>2</sup> Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act, Pub. L. No. 116-111, § 2, 8 Stat. 134 (2020).

town of Galveston to the burgeoning community of Freedmen's Town, located in the 4th Ward of Houston, Texas.”<sup>3</sup>

- i. TxDOT will assist with federal efforts to develop the Emancipation Trail and will evaluate the feasibility of accommodating trail links within the state’s right-of-way within the project limits. The estimated completion date of the study is Fall of 2023.<sup>4</sup> A map showing the draft routes of the Emancipation National Historic Trail is attached to this Agreement as Exhibit B.<sup>5</sup>
- ii. TxDOT will accommodate proposed designated trail links that result from the Emancipation National Historic Trail Study to the extent such proposed trail links are feasible within the state’s right of way for the NHHIP.
- iii. TxDOT will place signage and historical marks within the State’s right of way for the NHHIP for the proposed designated trail links that result from the Emancipation National Trail Study to extent such placement is feasible.
- iv. The reconnection of Andrews Street by the NHHIP over the proposed downtown connectors would accommodate the Emancipation Trail within the project limits. The reconnection of Andrews Street by the NHHIP is proposed to be a pedestrian-cyclist only bridge.
- v. The proposed pedestrian-bike realm on Alabama Street, Elgin Street, Tuam Street, McGowen Street and Cleburne Street as part of the NHHIP will enhance accessibility to Emancipation Park which is outside and one block away from the project boundary.
- vi. TxDOT will participate in the National Park Service’s feasibility study for the Emancipation National Historic Trail Study to share how the NHHIP pedestrian-bike realm can complement the potential study outcomes and any other transportation-related aspects of the Emancipation National Historic Trail.
- vii. Upon mutual understanding with the Descendants of Olivewood Inc., TxDOT will provide assistance with applying and submitting the Olivewood Cemetery for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* See also *Emancipation National Historic Trail Feasibility Study*, National Park Service, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?parkID=456&projectID=95793>.

<sup>4</sup> *Emancipation National Historic Trail Feasibility Study Newsletter*, National Park Service, <file:///C:/Users/JGray1/Downloads/Emancipation%20Newsletter%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Maps – Draft Routes Under Study – Emancipation National Historic Trail Feasibility Study*, National Park Service, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=456&projectID=95793&documentID=111157>.

## 7. Access During Construction

TxDOT is committed to ensuring safe access to schools and reducing impacts to public transit, pedestrian, and bike access within the project area throughout the construction phase. TxDOT will continue to communicate with schools, parents, neighborhood and community stakeholders, and METRO regarding the construction schedule to ensure continued safe pedestrian, bike and transit access during construction of the Project.

- a) School access during construction:
  - i. In order to ensure that pedestrian and bike access to schools is maintained during construction, during the detailed design phase TxDOT will develop plans for traffic control detours of pedestrian and cyclist movements, as depicted in Exhibit C, showing the locations of schools adjacent to the project footprint, existing routes traveled by children to these schools, routes during construction, and the anticipated finished condition of pedestrian and cyclist routes after construction on the project is completed.
  - ii. Where construction of the Project will require pedestrian and bicycle detour routes to maintain access to schools, TxDOT commits to bring such designated detour routes up to current standards prior to beginning the associated construction in order to ensure that students, staff, and the public continue to have safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle paths of travel to those schools.
  - iii. TxDOT will design and direct its contractor to maintain non-circuitous sidewalks to maintain safe pedestrian and cyclist access to schools during and after construction.
  - iv. TxDOT will work directly with schools to develop parent and school bus drop-off and pick-up routes, direct TxDOT contractors to maintain the safe operations of these routes during construction, and inform decisions about appropriate detour routes with the goal of safety and minimizing increased commute times.
  - v. TxDOT will maintain communication with school officials for the design of access accommodations during the construction phase.
  - vi. TxDOT will provide an ombudsman for the schools to communicate concerns that arise during construction to TxDOT in order for timely resolution of concerns.
  - vii. During construction, TxDOT will establish and maintain a public website to inform the public about bicycle and pedestrian access. The website will include maps and ways to contact the ombudsman.

- b) Transit access during construction:
  - i. TxDOT will obtain METRO's review and comment of the construction work phasing and sequencing of light rail facilities and operations that are impacted by construction.
  - ii. TxDOT will obtain METRO's review and comment in instances where a bus stop needs to be temporarily relocated during construction.
- c) Traffic management during construction:
  - i. TxDOT has established the Innovative Traffic Steering Committee, consisting of local government representatives and other stakeholders, to gather input in advance of the project on potential traffic phasing and mitigation activities to minimize adverse impacts of construction. TxDOT will coordinate with this Committee to identify and pursue Federal funds to support such activities and will incorporate the input into the construction plan when feasible to effectively manage mobility.
  - ii. TxDOT will provide fourteen (14) calendar days public notices of bus and light rail service disruptions due to construction activities.
  - iii. TxDOT will post notices of bus and light rail service disruptions on the project website.

## **8. Meaningful Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

The purpose of this provision is to ensure that TxDOT fully complies with Title VI meaningful access requirements on the Project. TxDOT commits to the specified actions listed in this provision with respect to all individuals with LEP who need or request language assistance services, which include interpretation and translation. Specifically, TxDOT is committed to communicating clearly and thoroughly with all affected individuals about projects from the beginning of scoping through the end of construction. This commitment includes providing ready and accurate language assistance services to those individuals who need or request it at no cost. Additionally, TxDOT commits to ensuring that individuals with LEP are provided with timely language assistance services throughout the right-of-way acquisition and relocation process for the NHHIP. TxDOT further commits to develop or update internal LEP policies, plans, and training for staff and consultants as specified in this provision in order to ensure that language assistance services are adequately provided and documented on future projects. To effectuate these commitments, in addition to the specific required actions below, the Parties will negotiate and finalize an updated TxDOT Language Assistance Plan and Policy, consistent with the U.S. Department of Justice's 2002 LEP guidance on updating recipient LEP plans, within one year of the effective date of this Agreement. TxDOT will first conduct a language access self-assessment to evaluate and improve its current language access program and ensure



that the Language Assistance Plan, Policy, and related procedures are consistent with Title VI.

- a) TxDOT will implement its language access program in accordance with Title VI and DOT regulations and consistent with Title VI guidance issued by DOT, in addition to the actions required by this section.
- b) TxDOT will not rely solely on the use of automatic translation services to translate vital print or digital communications.
- c) TxDOT will document, track, and monitor the LEP needs of anyone still to be displaced, including displaced residential owners, residential tenants, business owners, and business tenants.
- e) TxDOT will make language assistance services available in a timely way for relocation and acquisition activities. If language assistance services are delayed such that individuals with LEP are not receiving the information, benefits, or other aspects of the relocation and acquisition activities on a timeframe consistent with individuals with non-LEP, then TxDOT will document in the Progress Reports as required by Article VI of this VRA instances where the delivery of language assistance services were delayed. Such documentation will also include the circumstance(s) for the delay, when the requested language assistance services were actually provided, and whether the delay resulted in the person with LEP being limited in their access to, or missing, any deadlines, benefits, or other important aspects of the program.
- f) TxDOT will document future interactions between TxDOT's resource providers and relocation contractors and persons with LEP, including, but not limited to: the person's name, the specific language(s) and dialects needed, how spoken and written language needs are identified, date language assistance services are requested, date language assistance services are provided, and how language assistance services were provided to that person.
- g) No later than 45 calendar days after signing this VRA, TxDOT will provide to FHWA for review and comment a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for TxDOT resource providers, relocation contractors, and TxDOT staff that describes the roles and responsibilities for each regarding interactions with persons with LEP. The SOP will include procedures for documentation, communication, notice of free language assistance services to persons with LEP, language access complaints, and issue resolution. FHWA shall provide comments within 15 calendar days of receipt of the TxDOT SOP. Within 30 days of receipt of FHWA's comments, TxDOT and FHWA will resolve outstanding comments.
- h) In situations where individuals with LEP prefer to bring interpreters of their choosing, after they are told that TxDOT can provide a competent interpreter at

no cost, TxDOT will have an agency-sponsored interpreter present to ensure accuracy and completeness of the information presented.

- i) TxDOT will ensure that LEP service resources and relocation contractors provide all translated relevant documents and materials, including but not limited to legal documents, in the displacee's preferred language prior to requesting signatures or other legal commitments from the displacee.
- j) Within 120 calendar days of signing this VRA, TxDOT will develop and conduct LEP training for relevant staff, contractors, and anyone providing language assistance services related to the NHHIP on TxDOT's behalf regarding the implementation of the agency's written language assistance plan. The training will include, but not be limited to, language access requirements, the roles and responsibilities of consultants, documentation, and communication. The training will be reviewed and updated when the SOP required under this VRA is completed, and as needed at least every other year. TxDOT will report on the training materials provided and the number of TxDOT staff, contractors, or others trained in the Progress Reports required by VRA Article VI.
- k) Within 120 days of signing this VRA, TxDOT will conduct a survey to identify displaced residents and businesses who have already been relocated under the Project in order to assess the sufficiency of translation, interpretation, and other language assistance services. Based on the results of that survey, TxDOT will notify, both verbally (by phone or in person) and in writing in the respondent's preferred language, those who responded that they did not receive sufficient language assistance services that they have the right to supplemental language assistance services, and TxDOT will provide such supplemental language assistance services to those respondents who request them. Within 60 days of signing this VRA, TxDOT will provide to FHWA a draft survey of displaced residents and businesses. FHWA will provide comments back to TxDOT within 15 days of receipt of the draft survey. Within 15 days after receiving FHWA's comments, TxDOT and FHWA will resolve all comments and finalize the survey. Within 90 days of identifying through the survey those displaced residents and businesses who requested supplemental language assistance services, TxDOT will provide such identified displacees with remedial assistance to reduce the potential for any disparate impacts. Beginning 150 days after signing this VRA, TxDOT will provide a report to FHWA on its efforts detailing its compliance with this provision every 60 days until the provision of supplemental LEP services to all who request them and any additional activities resulting therefrom are completed.
- l) TxDOT shall provide competent language assistance services to any person who had been identified as needing language assistance services or otherwise requesting language assistance services to ensure contemporaneous interpretation during all public engagement opportunities. Language assistance services will be

made available proactively, at no cost, and in a timely manner for that engagement to support the facilitation of meaningful public engagement.

## **V. Section 508 Compliance**

TxDOT will submit all required plans, reports, and other information required by this VRA in a format that complies with the Information and Communication Technology Accessibility Standards under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (available at [Revised 508 Standards and 255 Guidelines \(access-board.gov\)](#)).

## **VI. Progress Reports**

Beginning 180 days after signing the VRA and every 180 days thereafter, TxDOT will submit a Progress Report to FHWA detailing the implementation of TxDOT required actions under Article IV of this VRA. Each Progress Report must include an update on all required TxDOT Actions: Reducing the NHHIP Footprint During Detailed Design; Displacements, Relocations, Housing, and Other Community Impacts; Flooding; Air Quality Mitigation; Structural Caps; Parks, Open Space, Trails, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities; Access During Construction; and Meaningful Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The Progress Reports must include any required information specified in this Agreement as outlined in Exhibit D. TxDOT will submit all Progress Reports and any other information required by the VRA to the FHWA Texas Division Office. TxDOT and FHWA will agree on the Progress Report format prior to submission of TxDOT's first required report. FHWA will review and provide timely comments on each progress report to TxDOT.

## **VII. Progress Meetings**

Each year, TxDOT and FHWA shall meet at least once to discuss the progress of the implementation of this VRA.

## **VIII. Abeyance**


The FHWA will hold in abeyance further actions regarding the complaints filed in the matter (described above) during the performance of this Agreement. At any time, should TxDOT not perform, or ensure performance, under this Agreement, FHWA will notify TxDOT as stated in Article IX of this VRA.

## **IX. Enforcement**

TxDOT agrees to implement the provisions of this VRA according to the timelines in this agreement as summarized in Exhibit D. If TxDOT, through its actions or inaction, fails to implement any part of this VRA or fails to cooperate with FHWA documentation and information requests, FHWA may invoke its authority pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 21.13, et seq., for failure or threatened failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If at any time FHWA makes such a determination, then FHWA shall notify TxDOT in writing. The notice shall include a statement of the basis for FHWA's determination and shall allow TxDOT thirty (30) days to either; (a) explain in writing the

reason for the actions and describe the remedial actions that have been or shall be taken to achieve compliance with this Agreement or (b) dispute the accuracy of FHWA's findings. If TxDOT does not respond to the notice, or if, upon review of TxDOT's response, FHWA determines that TxDOT has not complied with the terms of the Agreement, FHWA may pursue remedies authorized by law, including, but not limited to, issuing a Letter of Finding regarding the Title VI complaints described in Article I of this VRA, the withholding of Federal highway funds, and referral to the Department of Justice for enforcement action. 49 C.F.R. § 21.13(a); 28 C.F.R. § 42.413(c).

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Shailen P. Bhatt  
Administrator

Dated: 3-6-2023

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

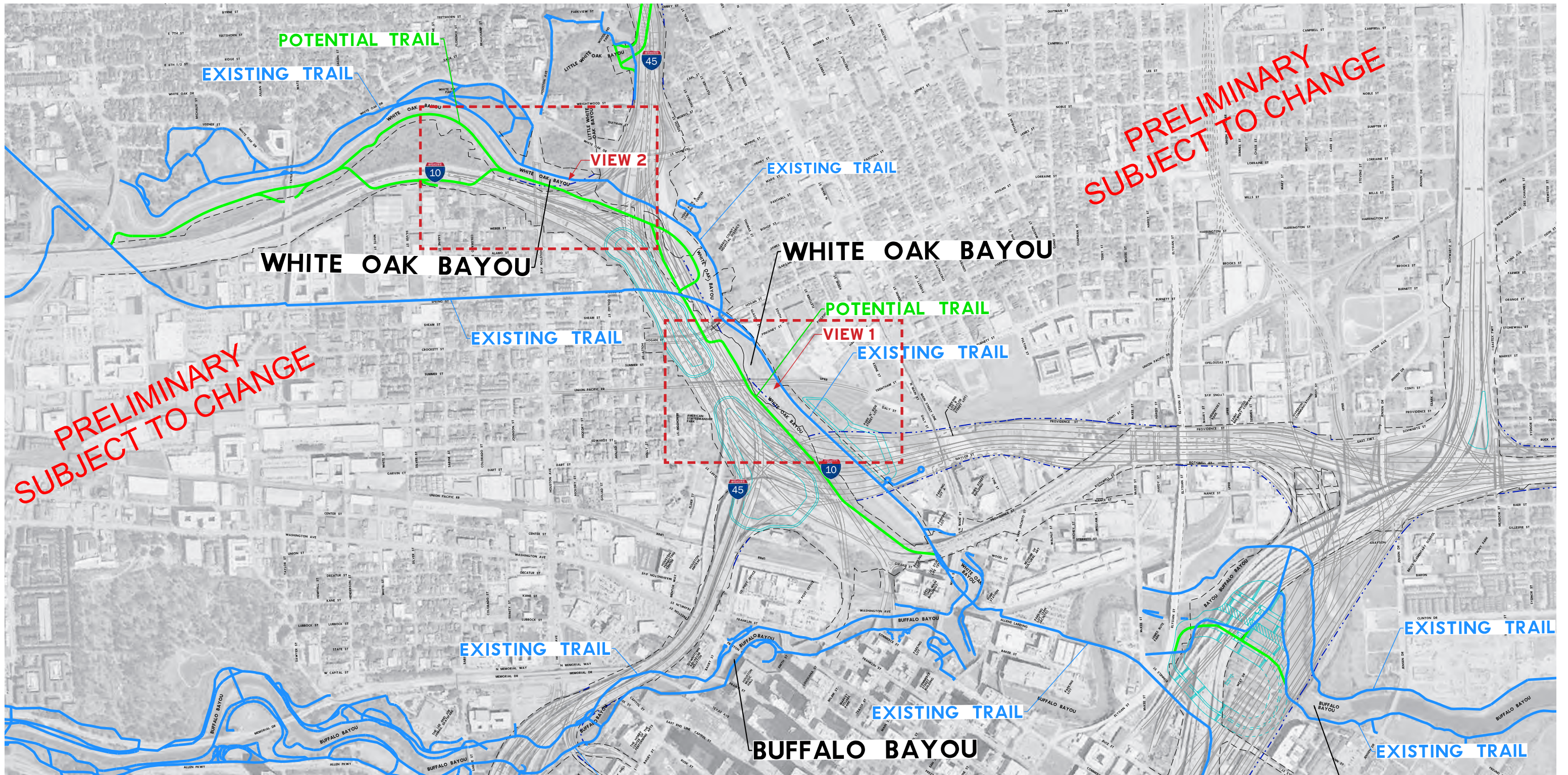
  
\_\_\_\_\_

Marc D. Williams, P.E.  
Executive Director

Dated: 3-3-2023

**Exhibit A**  
**Bayou Trail Maps**

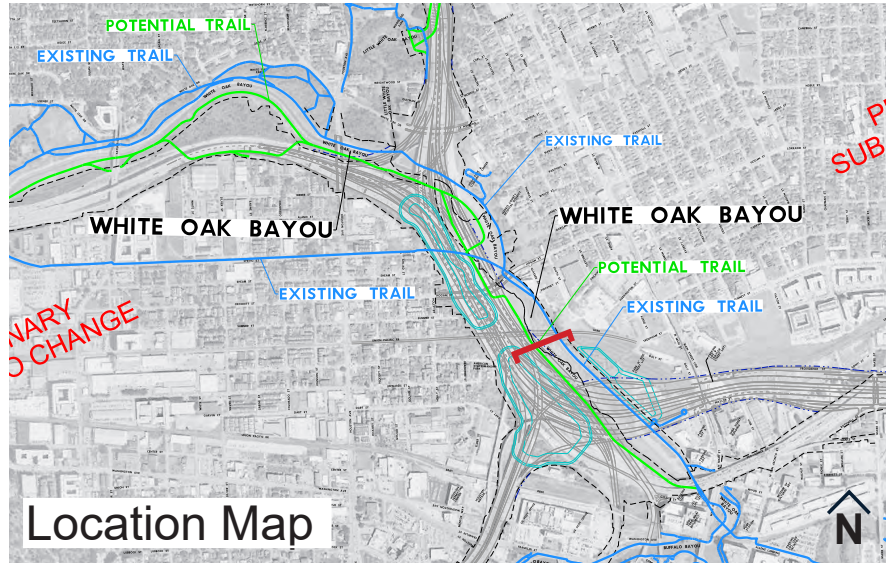
# WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



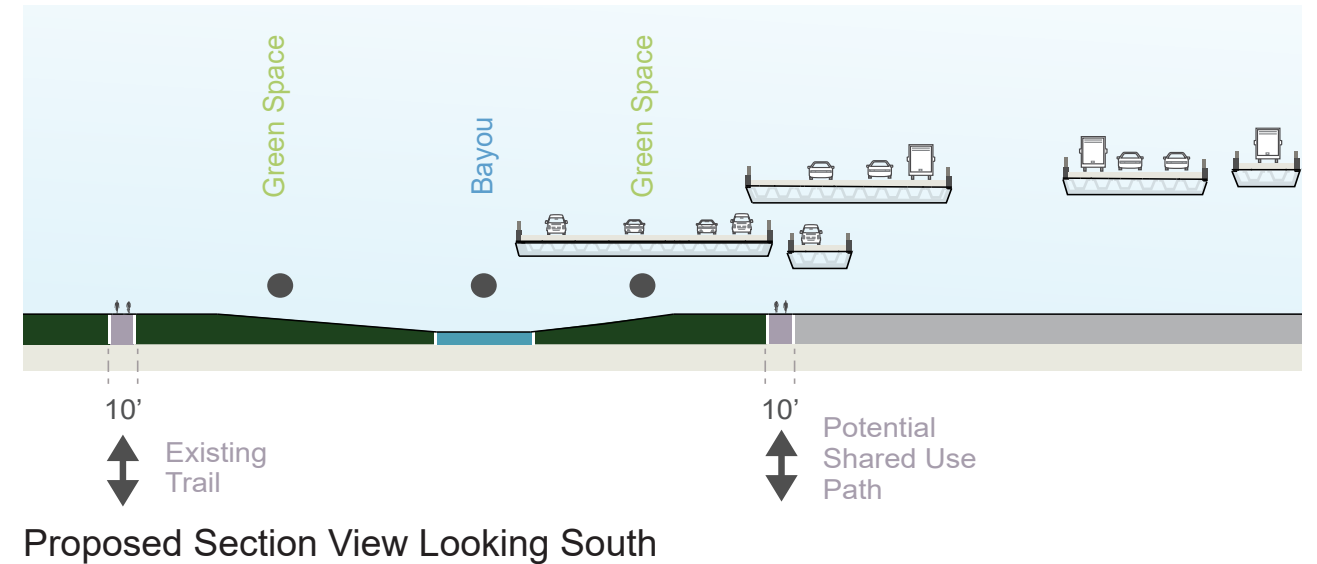
- Existing Trail To Remain
- Potential Trail By TxDOT
- Potential Pond

NOT TO SCALE

# WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



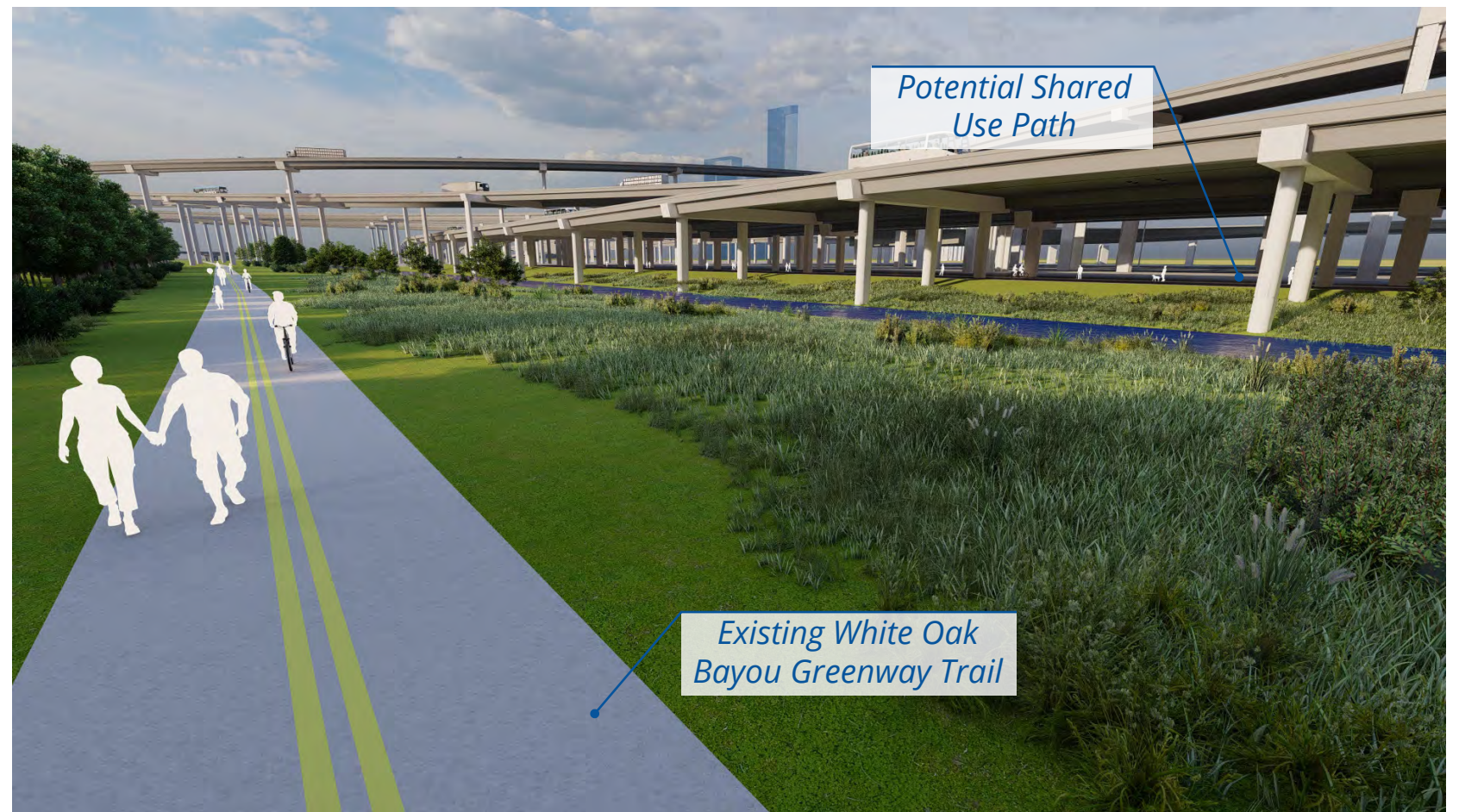
Location Map



Proposed Section View Looking South



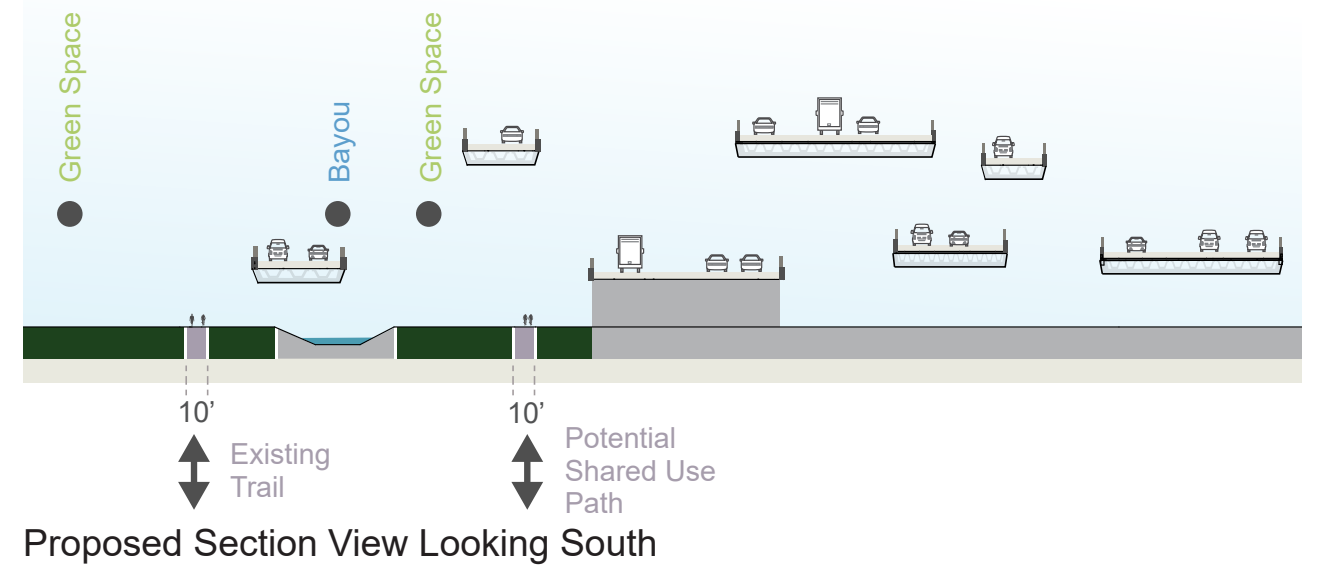
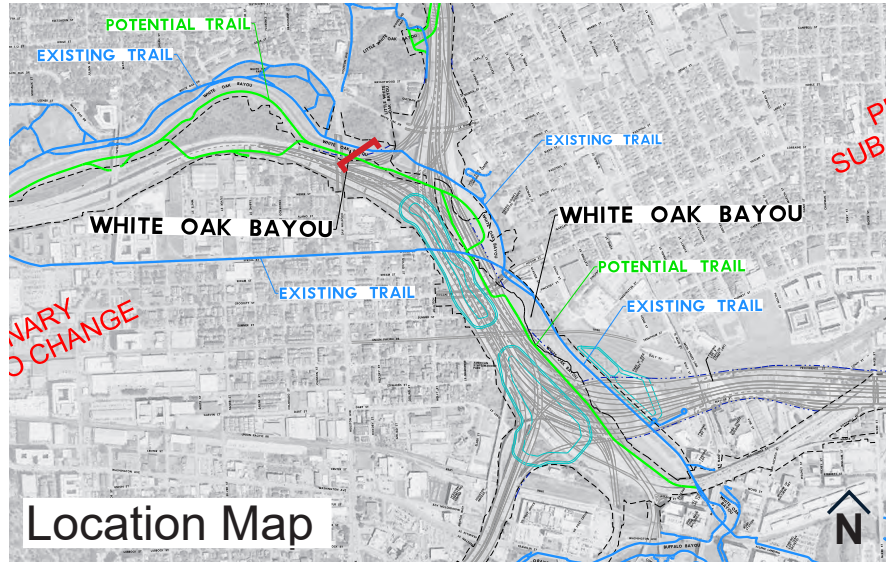
Existing Condition



Proposed Condition

NOT TO SCALE

# WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



Existing Condition

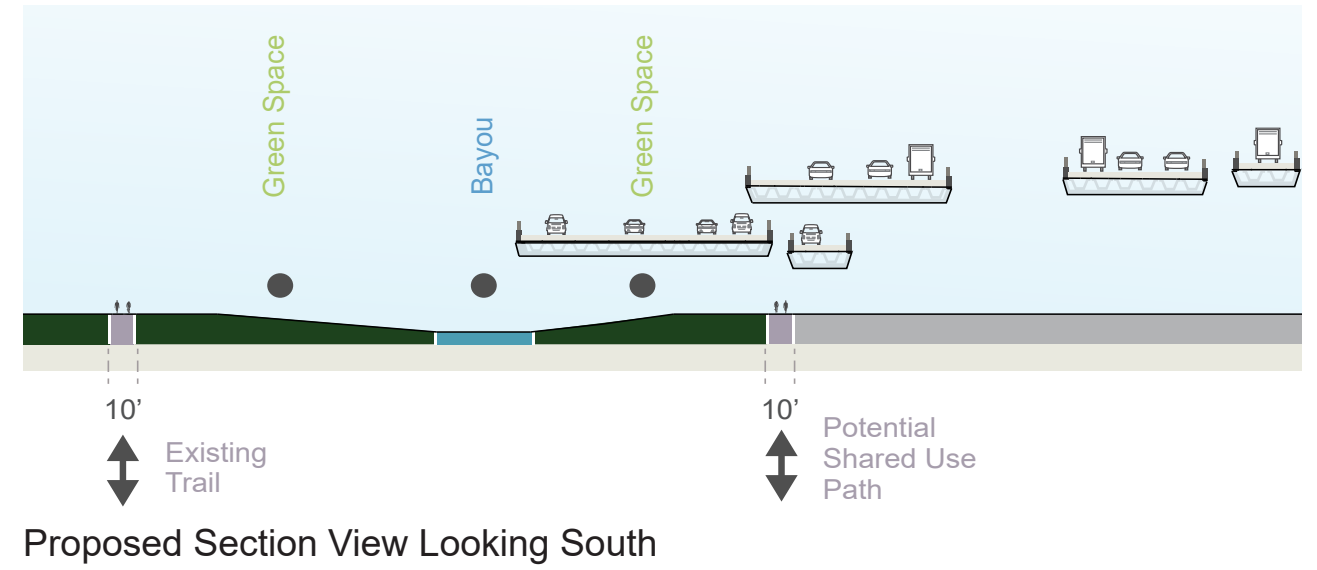
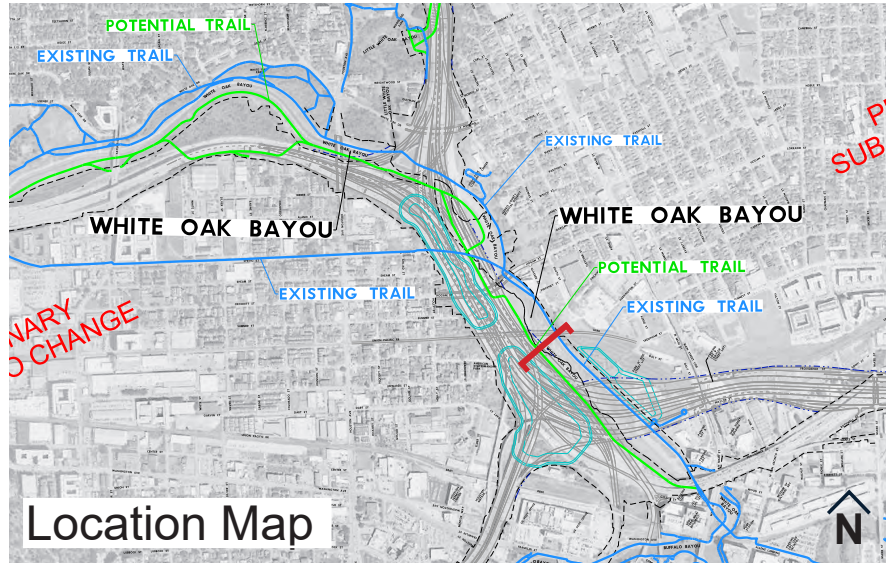


Proposed Condition

NOT TO SCALE



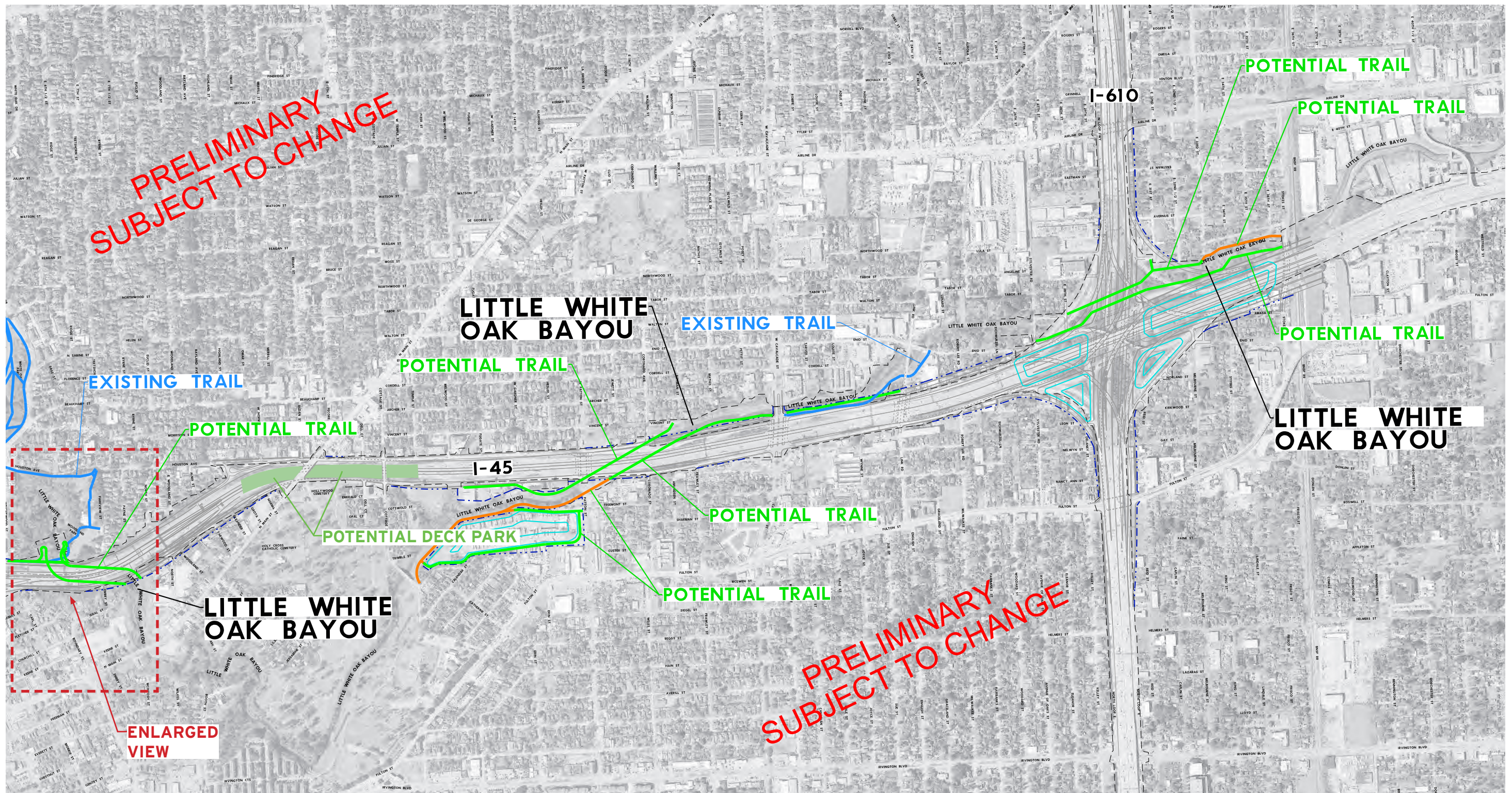
# WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



Proposed Condition

NOT TO SCALE

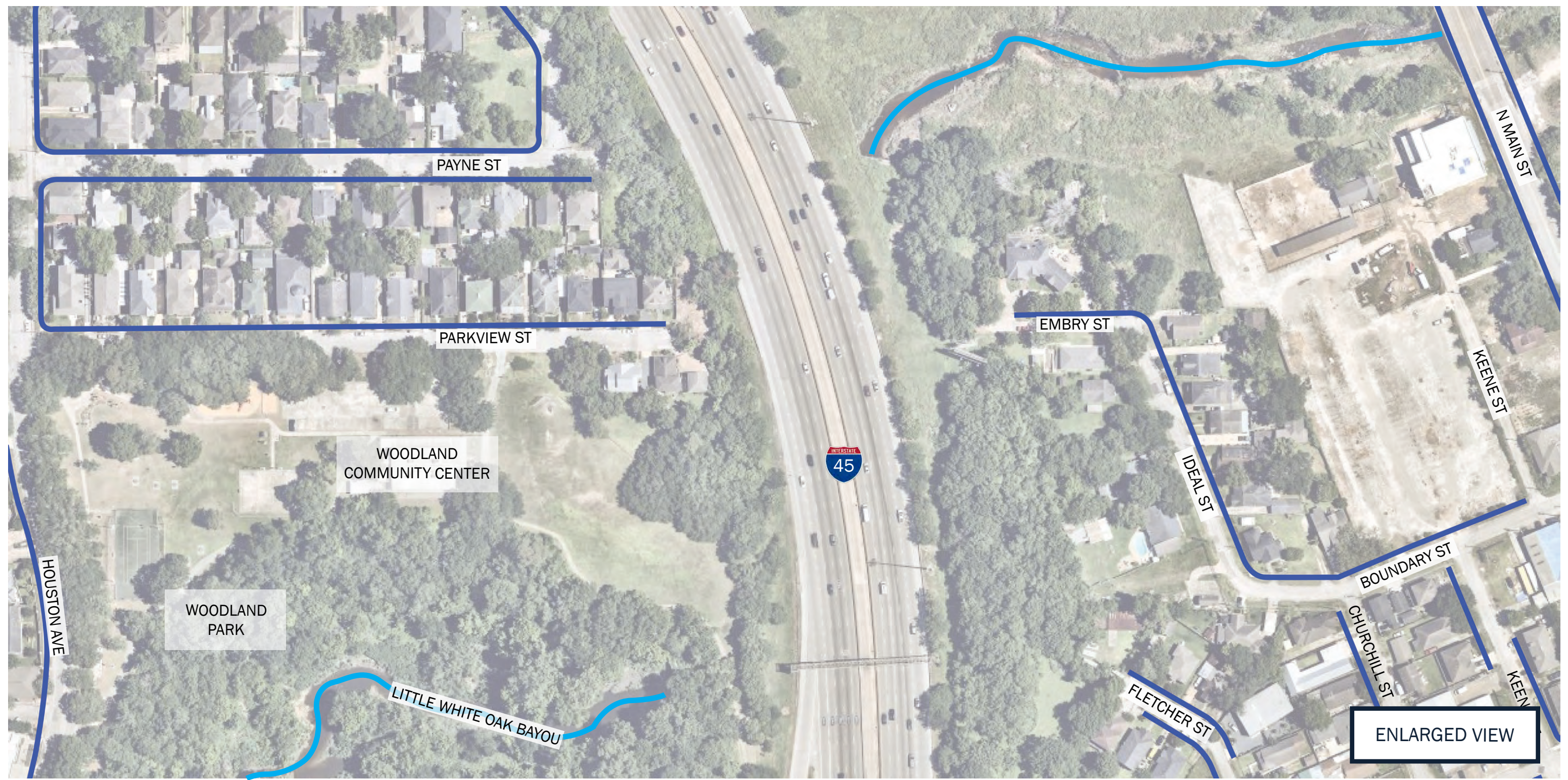
# LITTLE WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



- Existing Trail To Remain
- Potential Trail By TxDOT
- Potential Trail By Others (Outside TxDOT ROW)
- Potential Pond

NOT TO SCALE

# LITTLE WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS

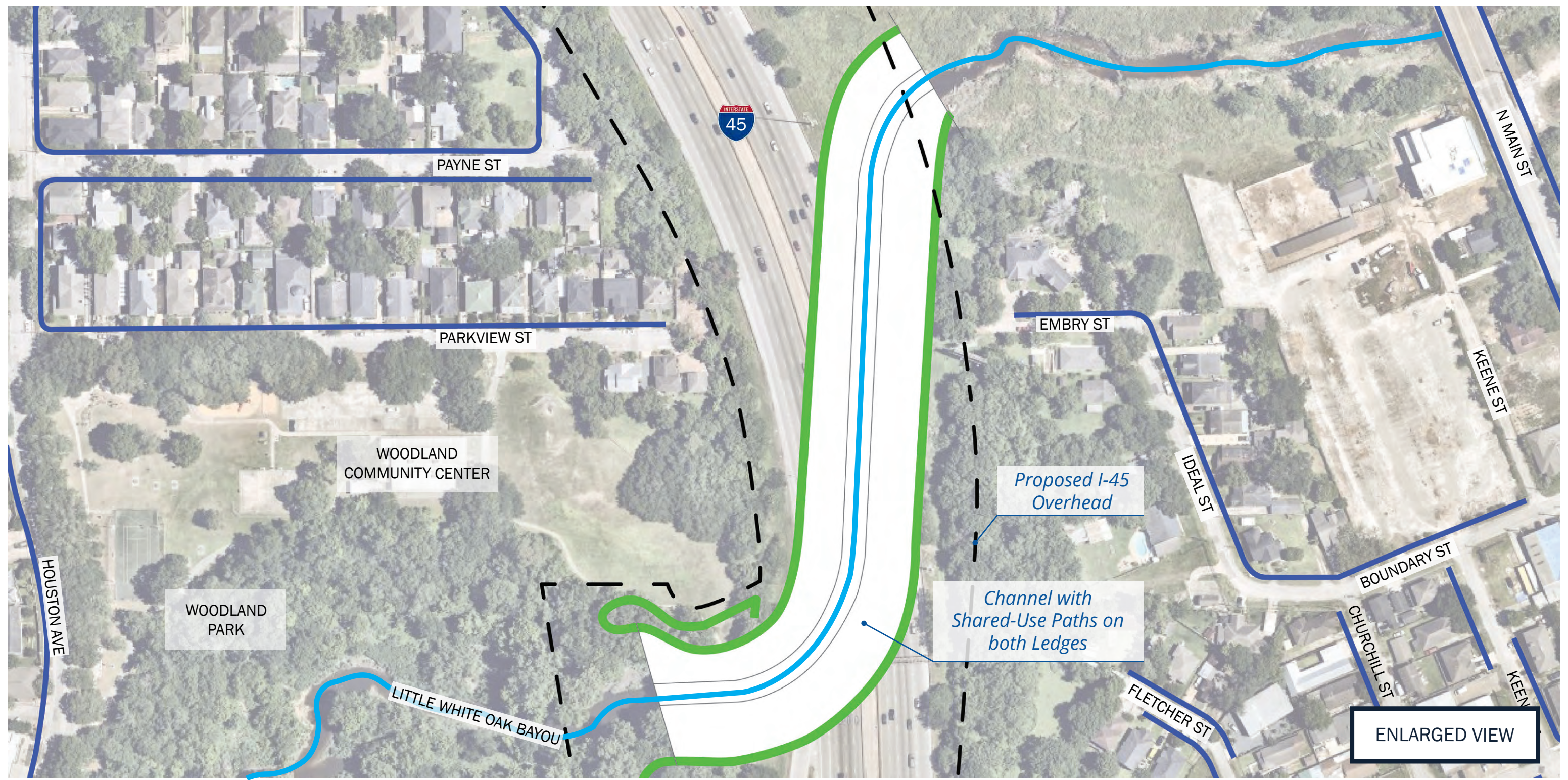


Existing Pedestrian Circulation

ENLARGED VIEW

↑ NOT TO SCALE

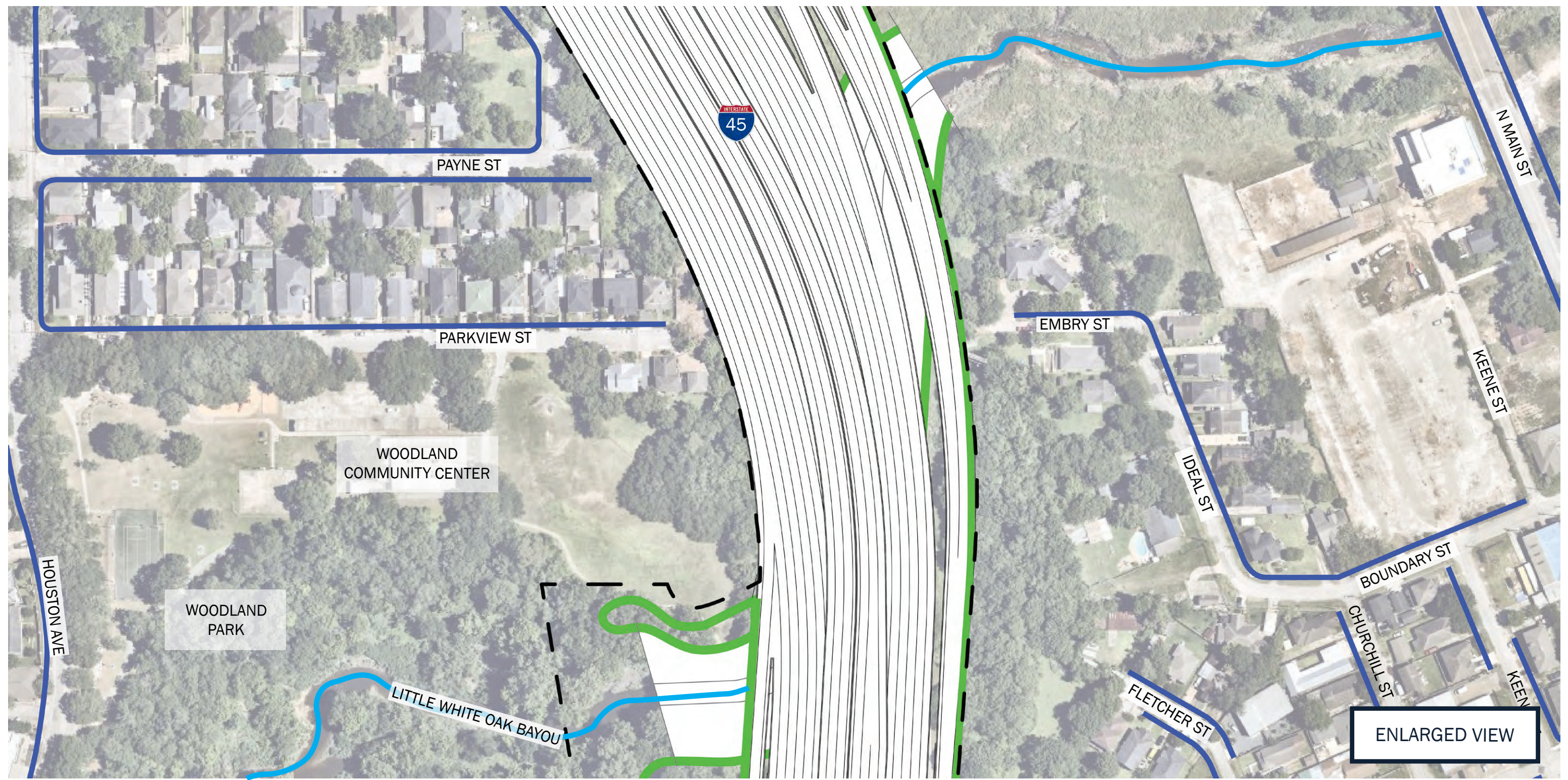
# LITTLE WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm

↑ NOT TO SCALE

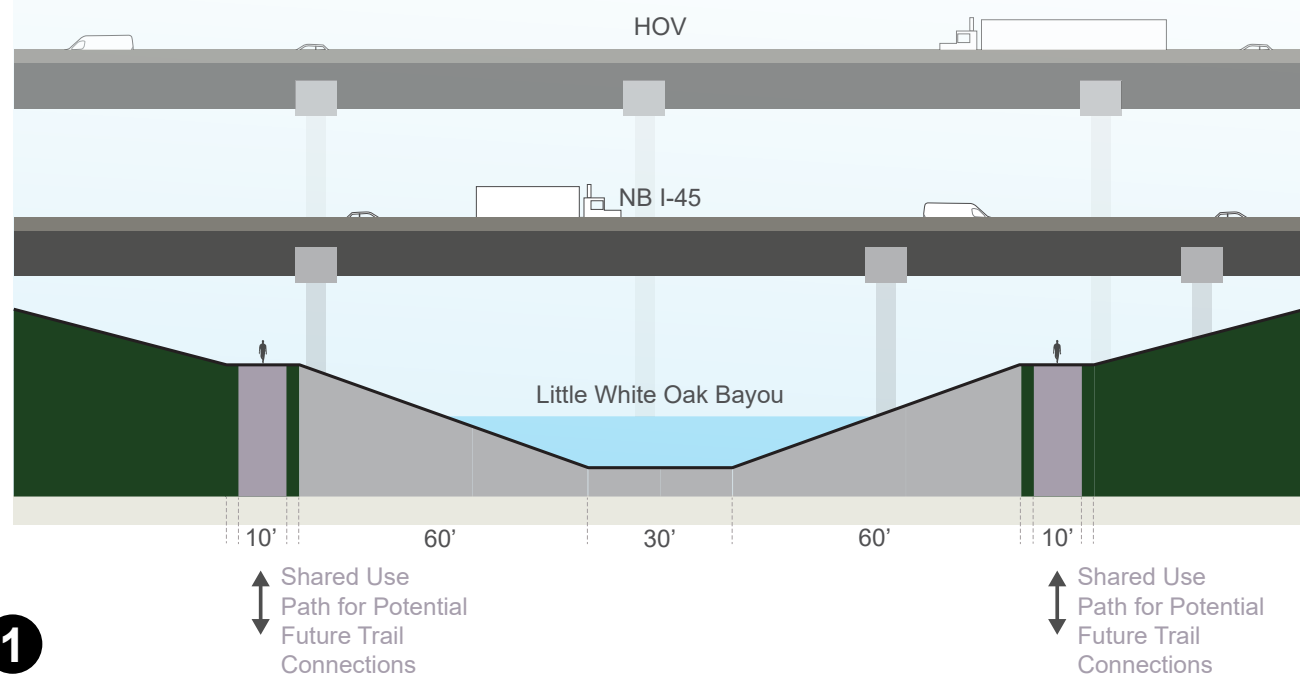
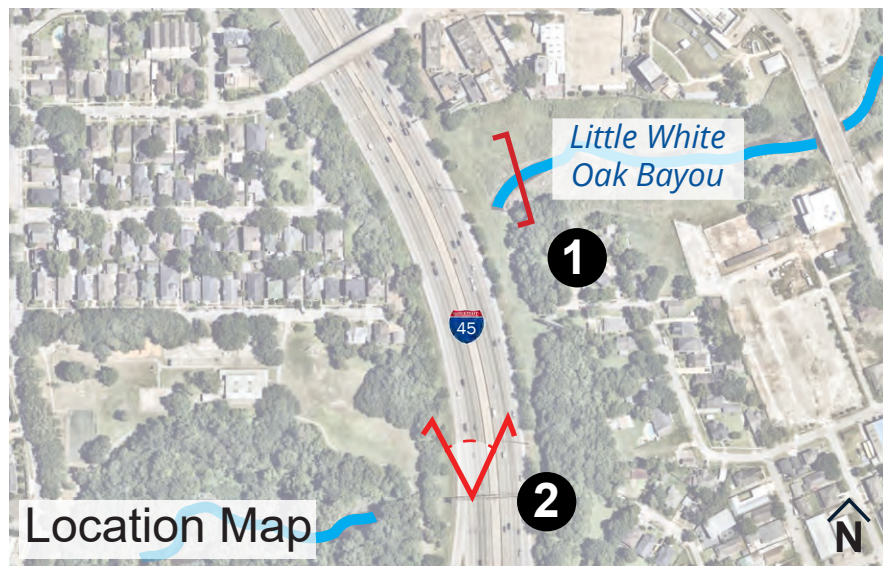
# LITTLE WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm

↑ NOT TO SCALE

# LITTLE WHITE OAK BAYOU TRAILS



**1** Proposed Section View at Little White Oak Bayou Looking North



Proposed I-45 over Little White Oak Bayou

NOT TO SCALE

**Exhibit B**  
**Emancipation Trail Study Map**



# Emancipation National Historic Trail (NHT) Feasibility Study Draft Routes Under Study



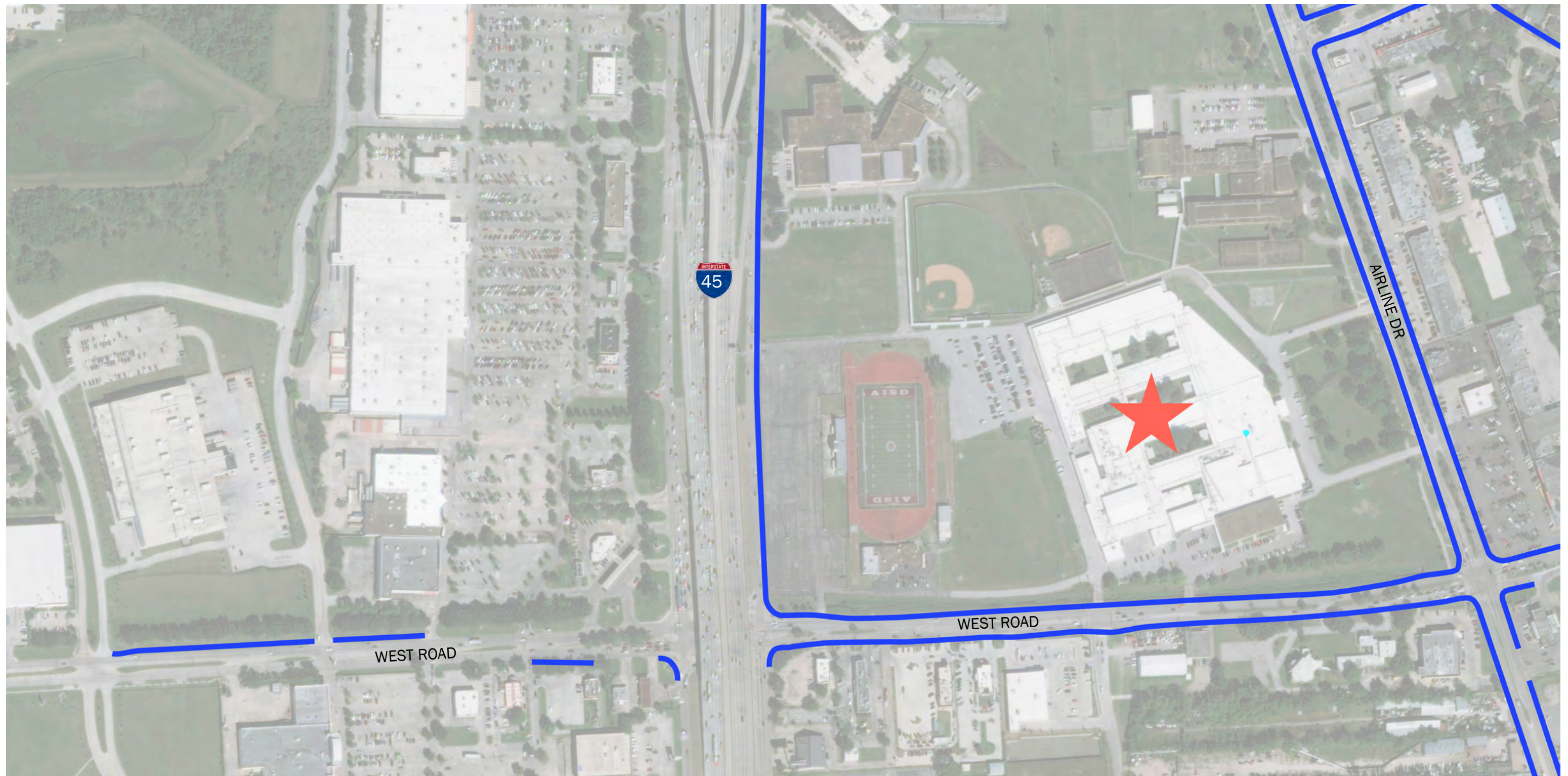
No warranty is made by the National Park Service as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

Service Layer Credits: World Street Map (with Relief) - no labels: Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



**Exhibit C**  
**Pedestrian/Bicycle Routes to Schools Map**

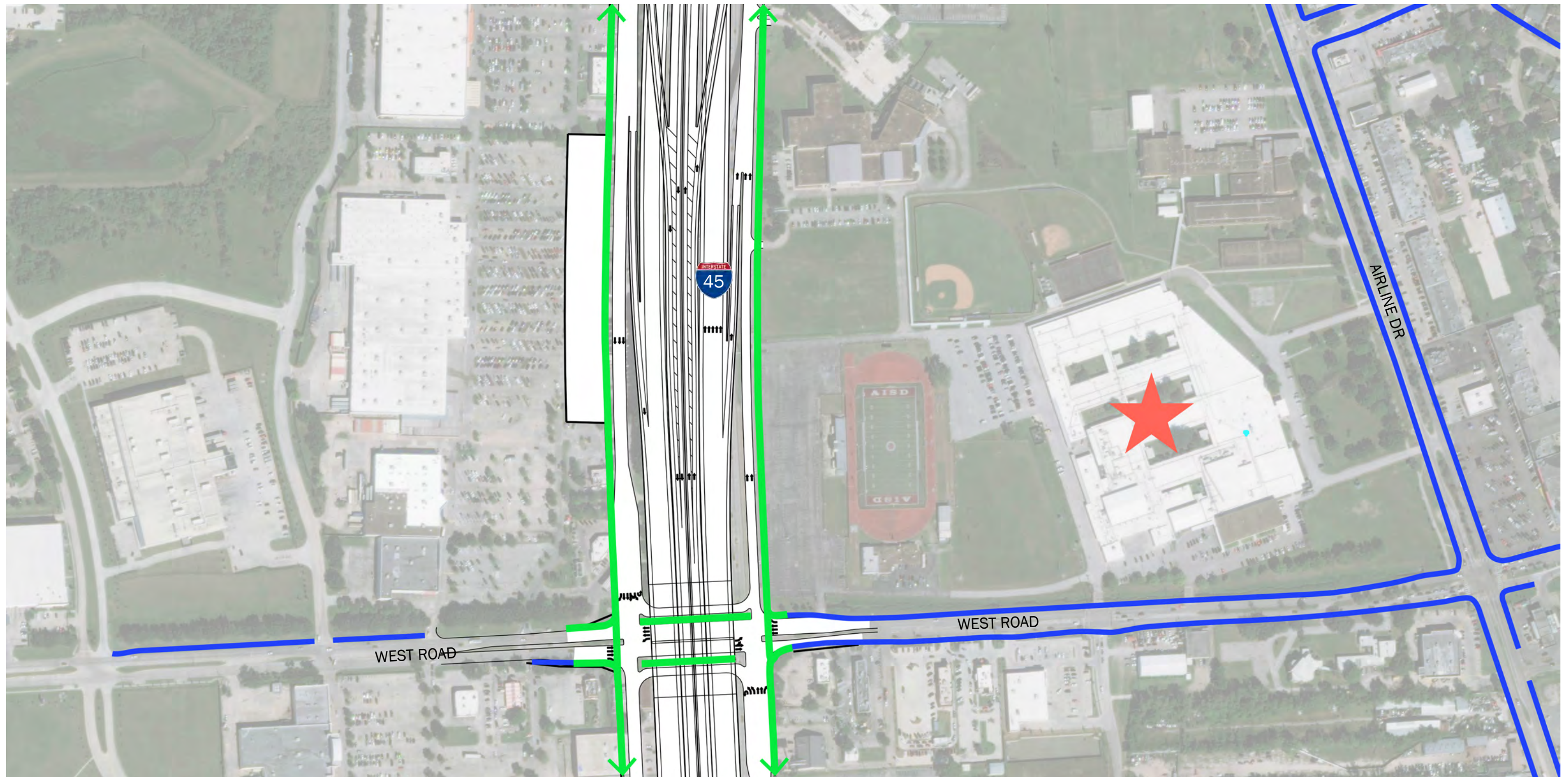
# ALDINE SCHOOL COMPLEX



Existing Pedestrian Circulation      ★ Aldine High School

↑ NOT TO SCALE

# ALDINE SCHOOL COMPLEX

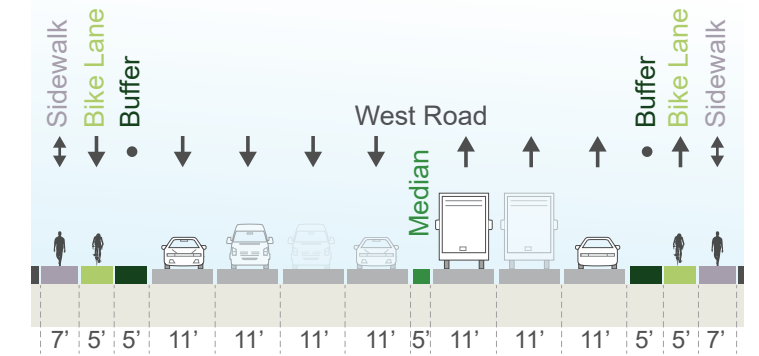


Existing Pedestrian Circulation  
Proposed Pedestrian Realm

Aldine High School

NOT TO SCALE

# ALDINE SCHOOL COMPLEX



Proposed Section View at West Road  
Looking East



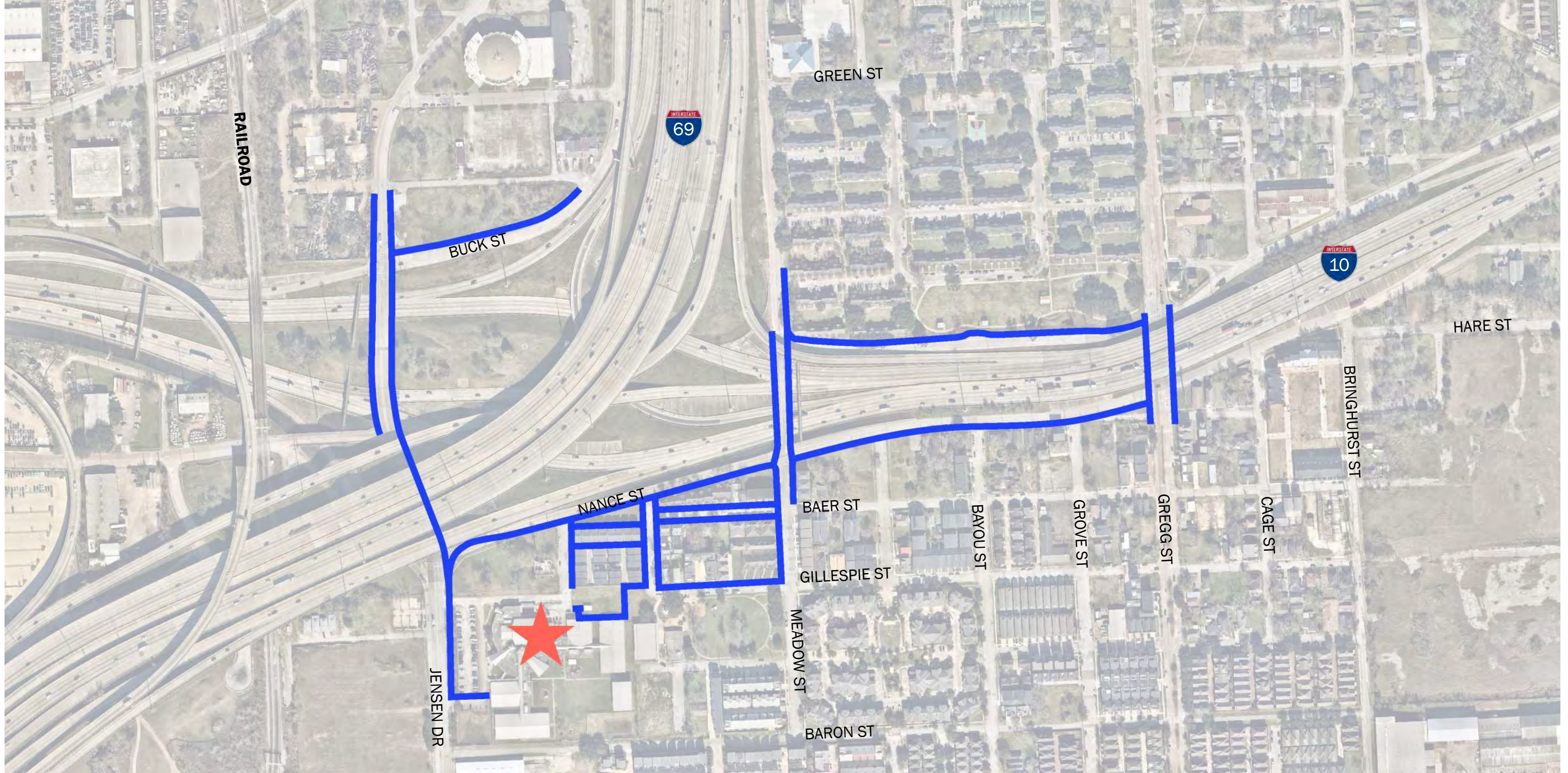
Existing I-45 and West Road



Proposed I-45 and West Road

NOT TO SCALE

# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

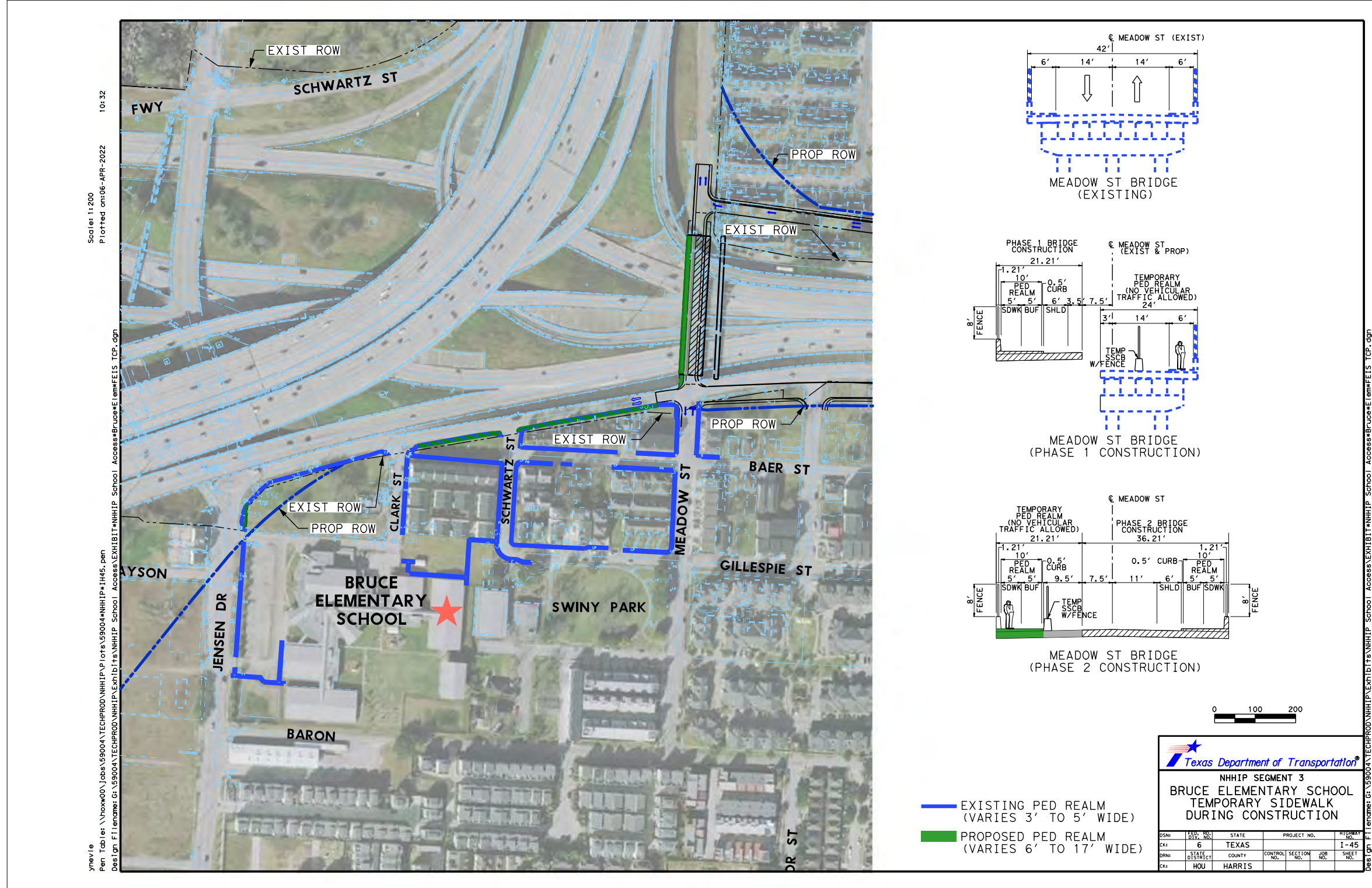


Existing Pedestrian Circulation

★ Bruce Elementary School

↑ NOT TO SCALE

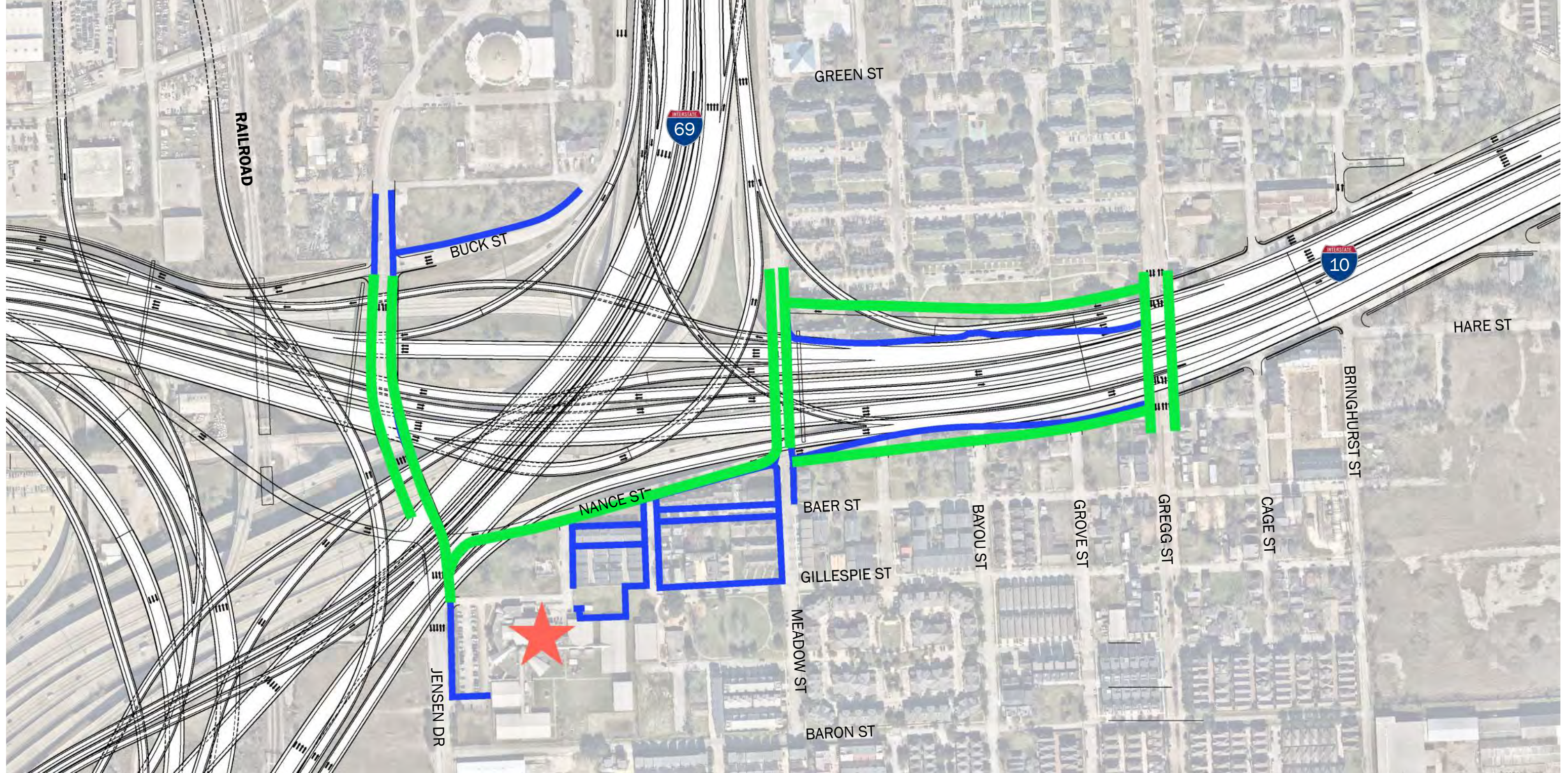
# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- Bruce Elementary School

↑ NOT TO SCALE

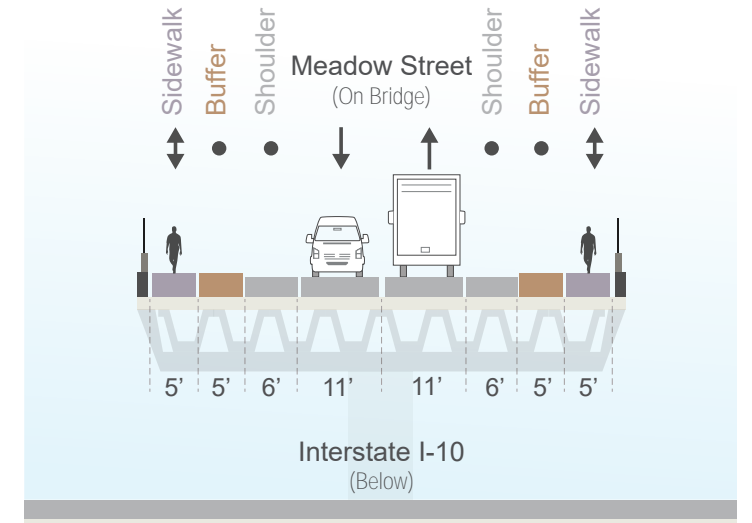
# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- Bruce Elementary School

NOT TO SCALE

# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Proposed Section View at Meadow Street



Existing I-10 and Meadow Street

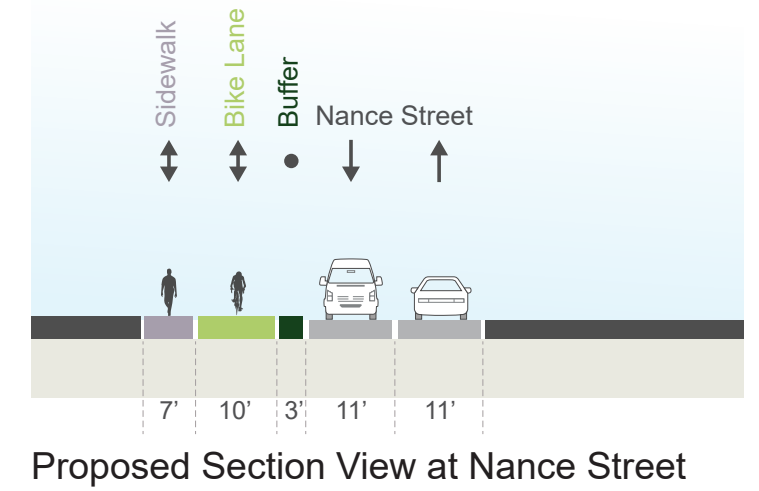
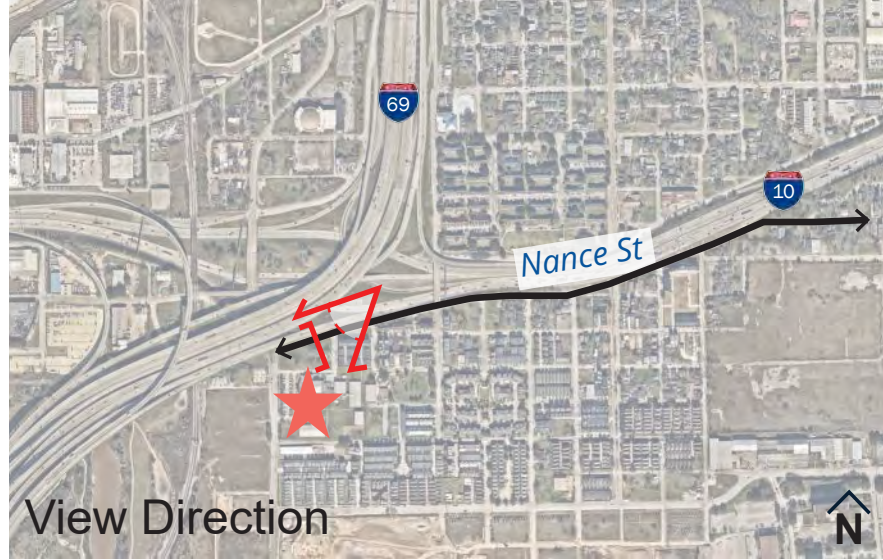


Proposed I-10 and Meadow Street

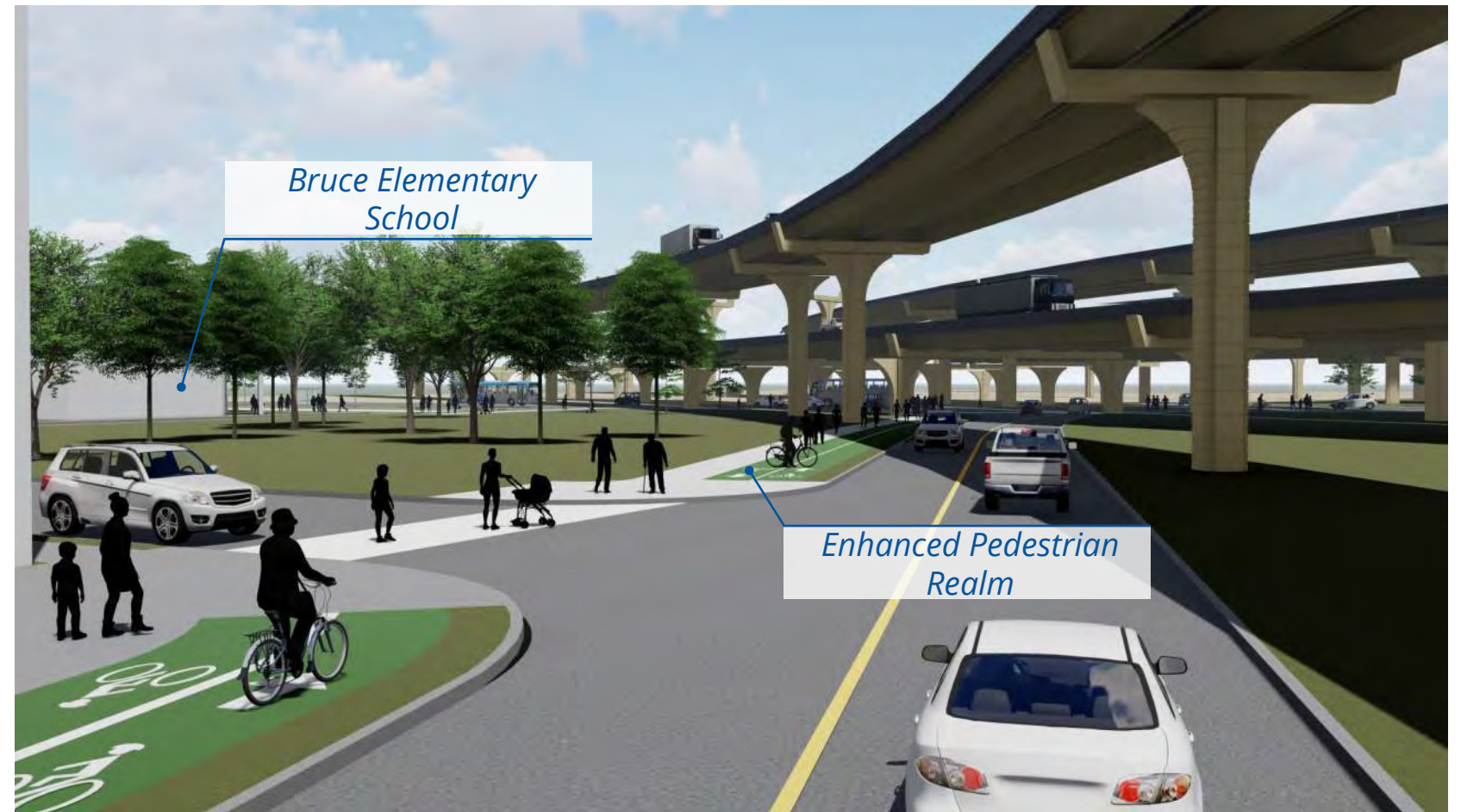
NOT TO SCALE



# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



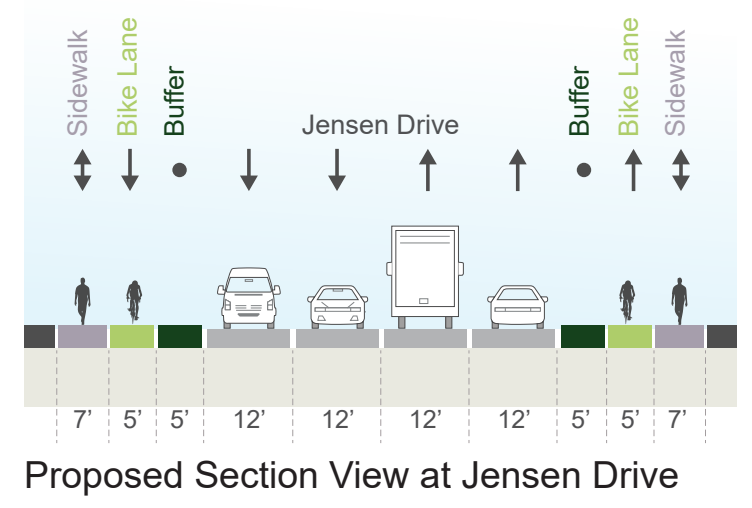
Existing I-10 / I-69 Connector Ramp and Nance Street



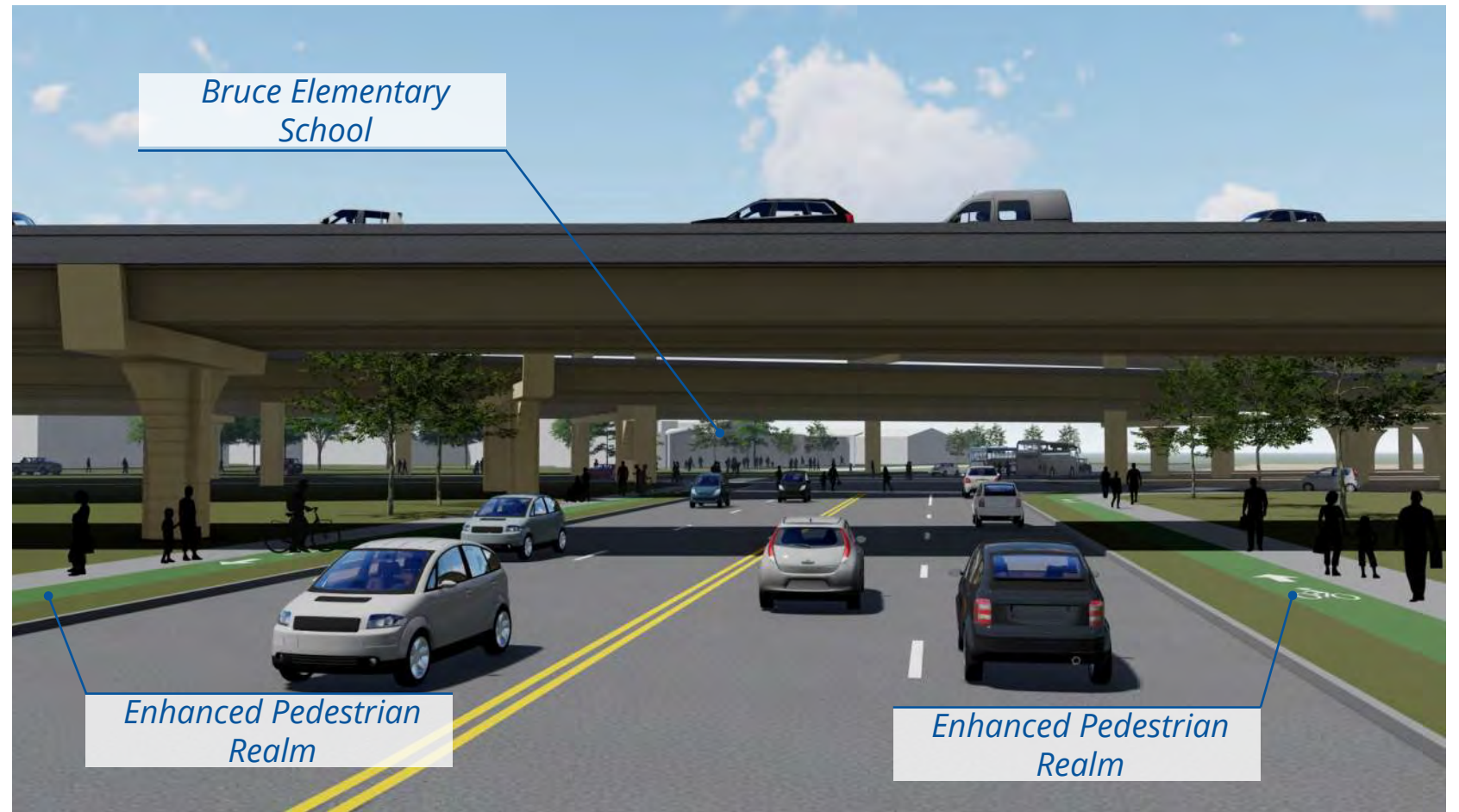
Proposed I-10 / I-69 Connector Ramp and Nance Street

NOT TO SCALE

# BRUCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



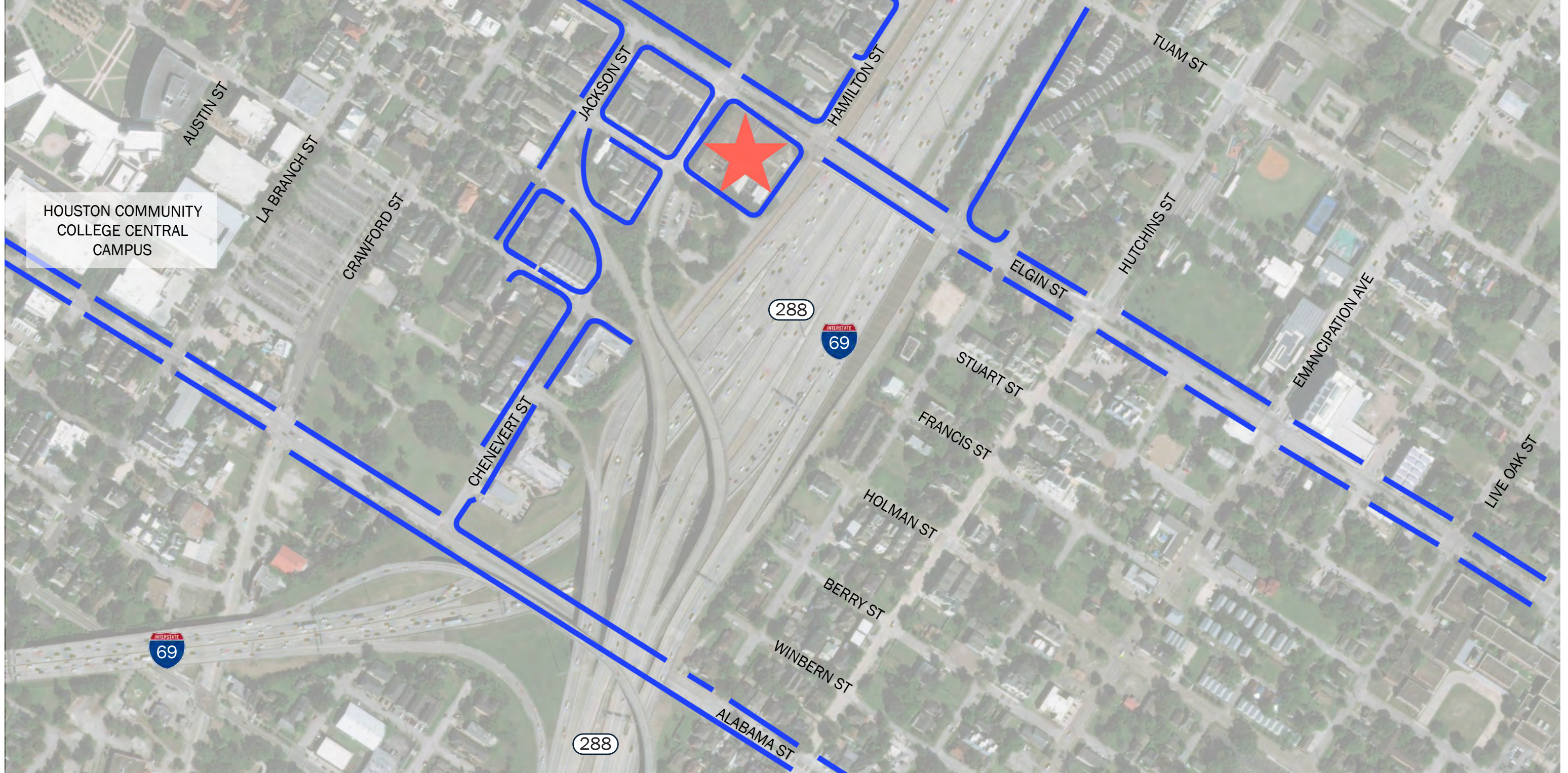
Existing Jensen Drive



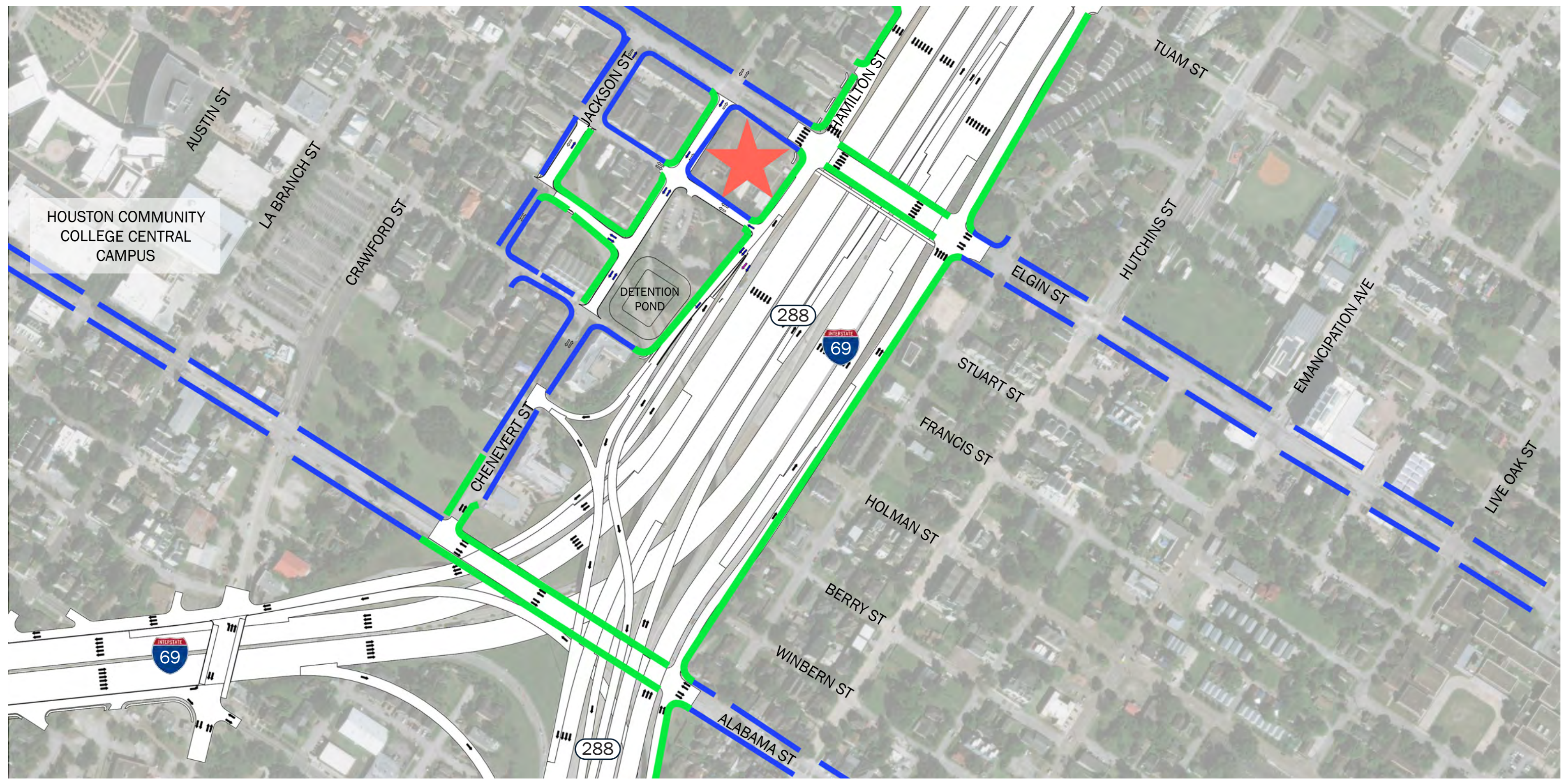
Proposed Jensen Drive

NOT TO SCALE

# HOUSTON ACADEMY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



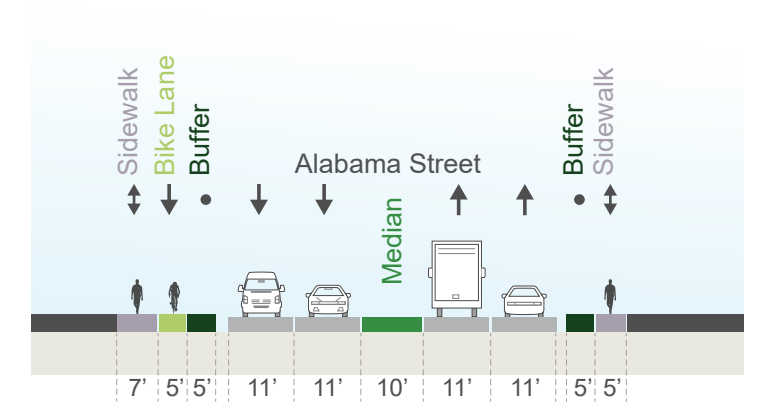
# HOUSTON ACADEMY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



- ▬ Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- ▬ Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- ★ Houston Academy for International Studies

↑ NOT TO SCALE

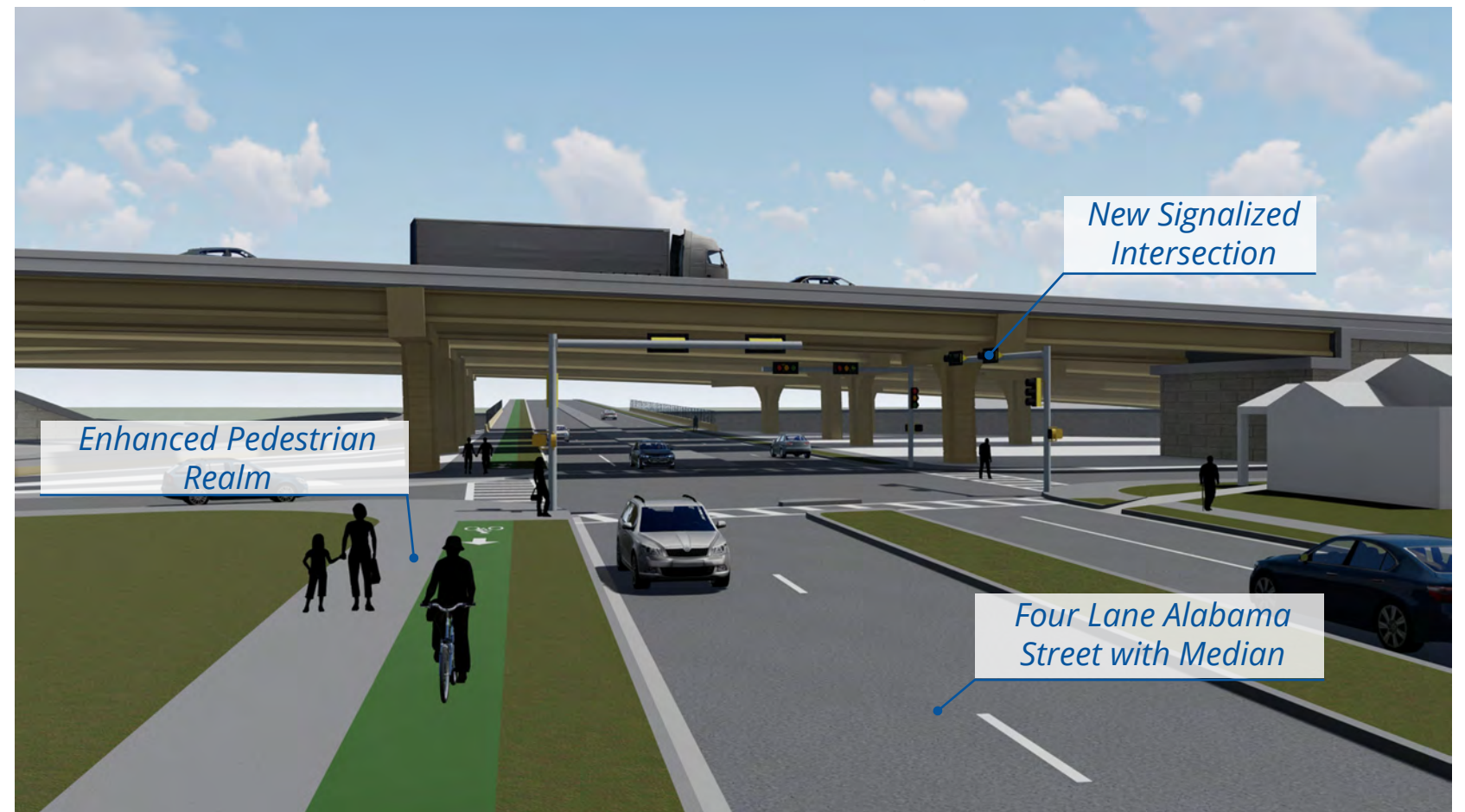
# HOUSTON ACADEMY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



Proposed Section View at Alabama Street Looking Northwest



Existing 288 and Alabama Street

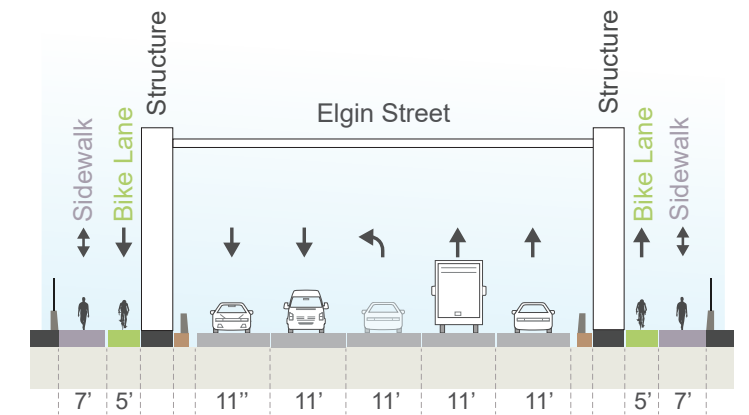


Proposed 288 and Alabama Street

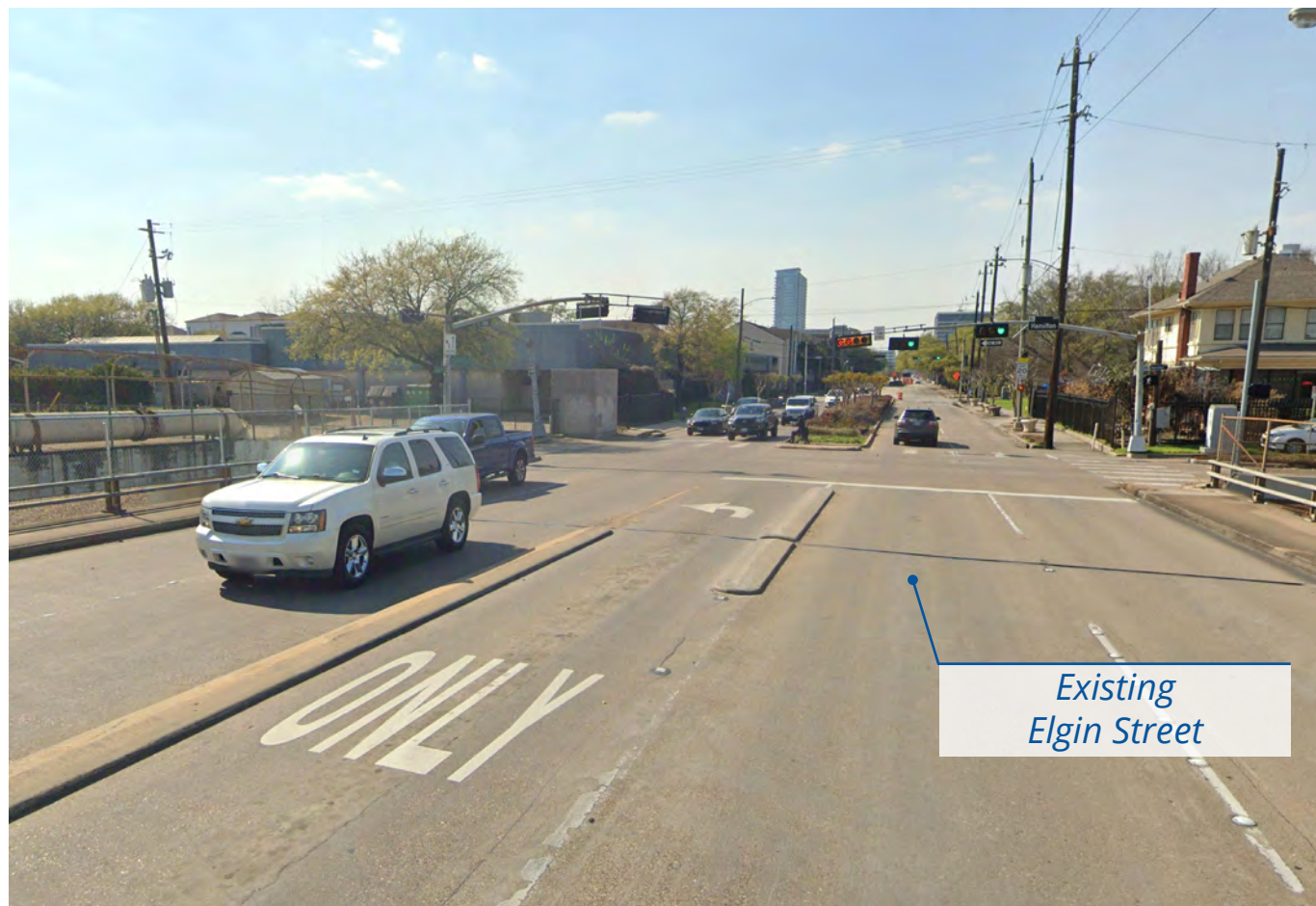
NOT TO SCALE

## Views Looking Northwest at Alabama Street

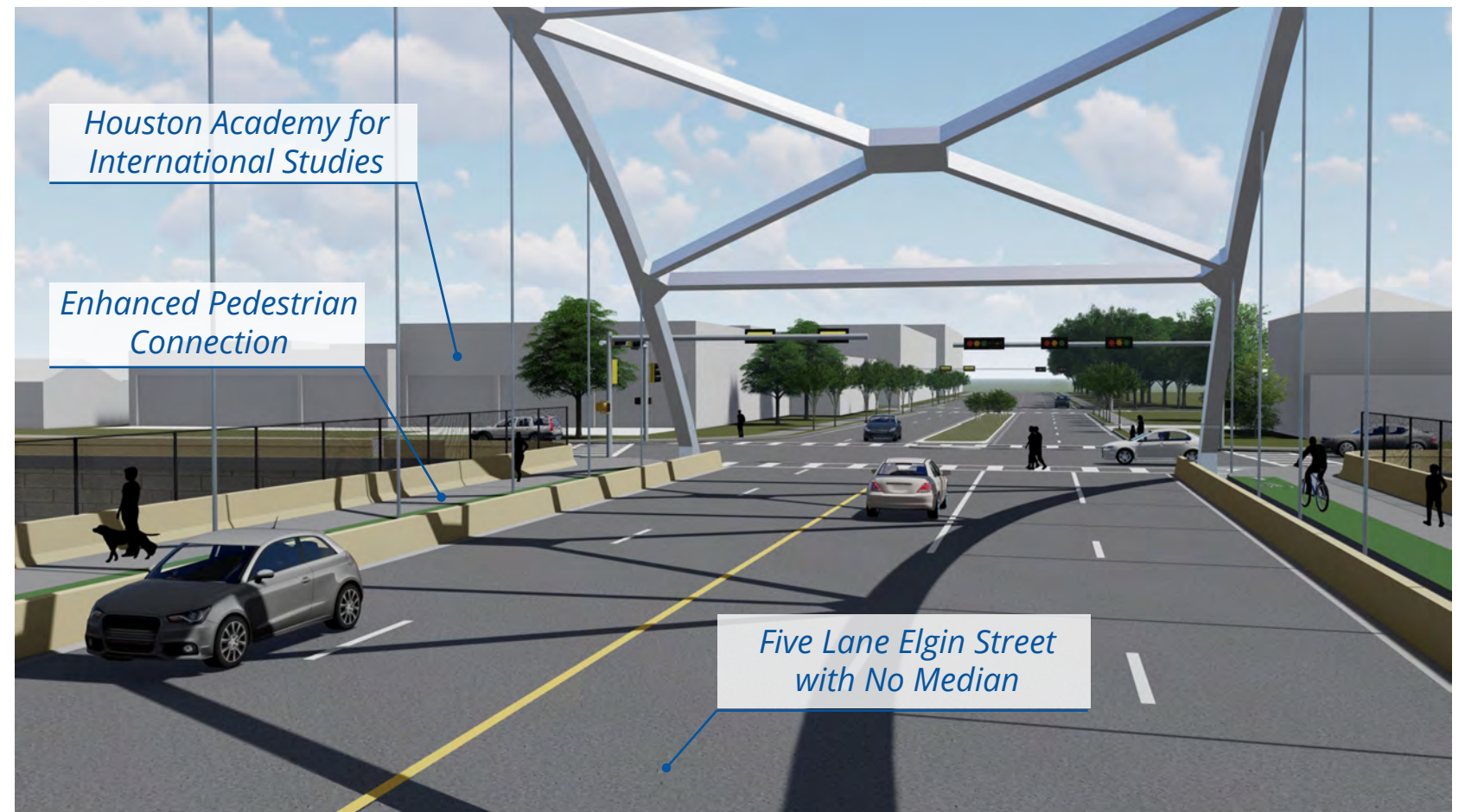
# HOUSTON ACADEMY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



Proposed Section View at Elgin Street Looking Northwest



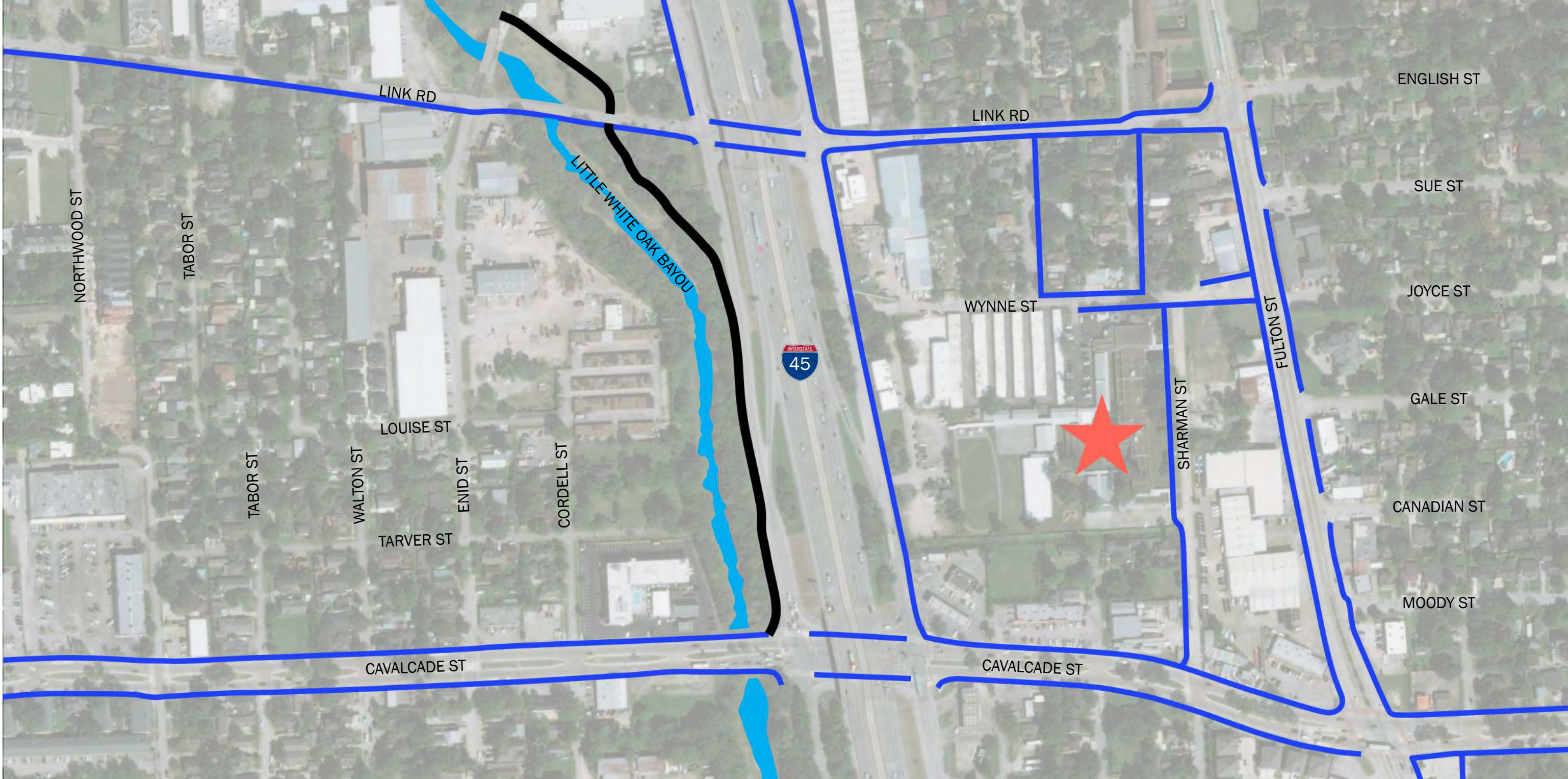
Existing Elgin Street and Hamilton Street Intersection



Proposed Elgin Street and Hamilton Street Intersection

NOT TO SCALE

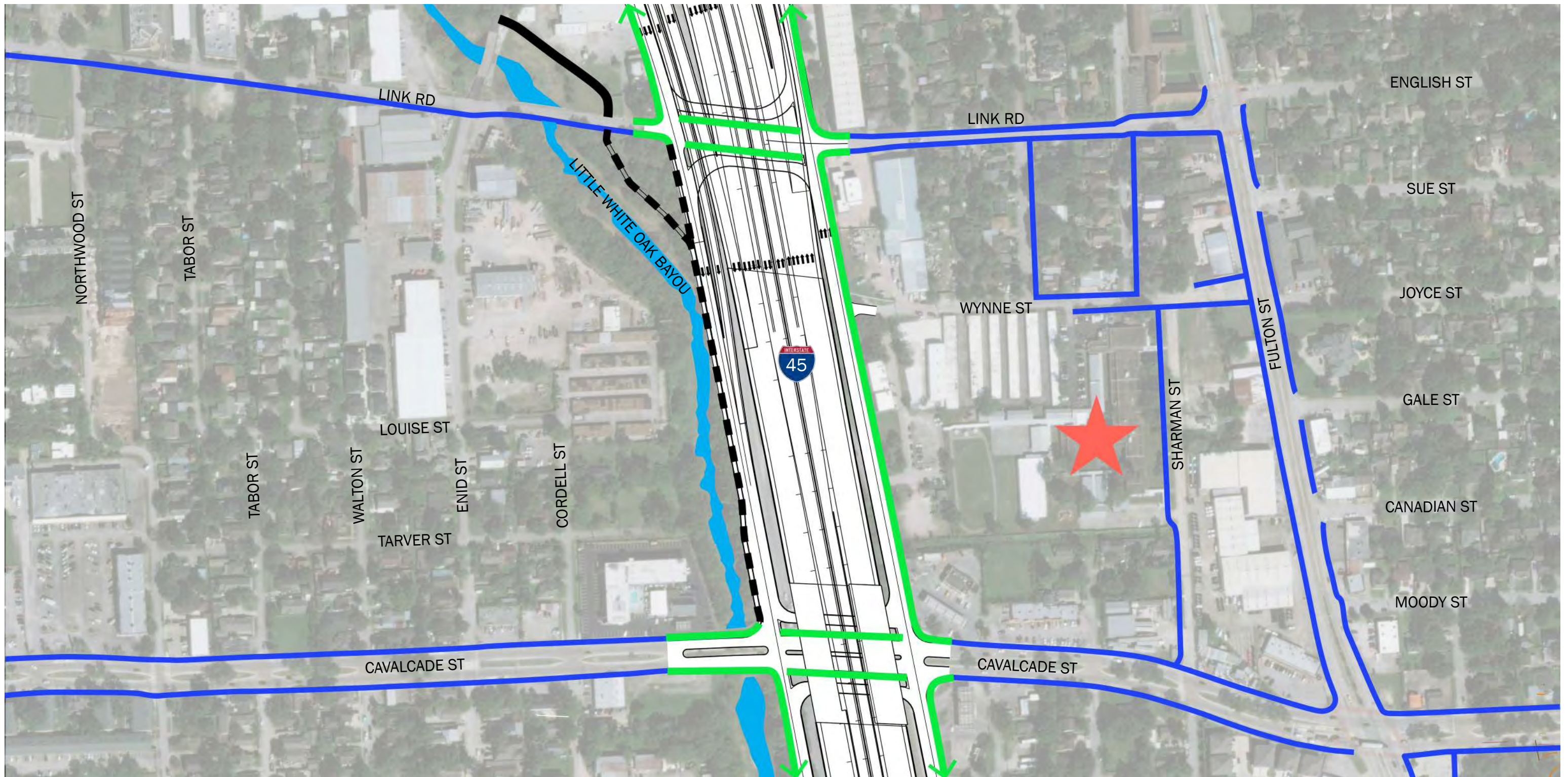
# JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONNECTION



— Existing Pedestrian Circulation    
 ★ Jefferson Elementary School  
— Existing Hike/Bike Trail

↑ NOT TO SCALE

# JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONNECTION

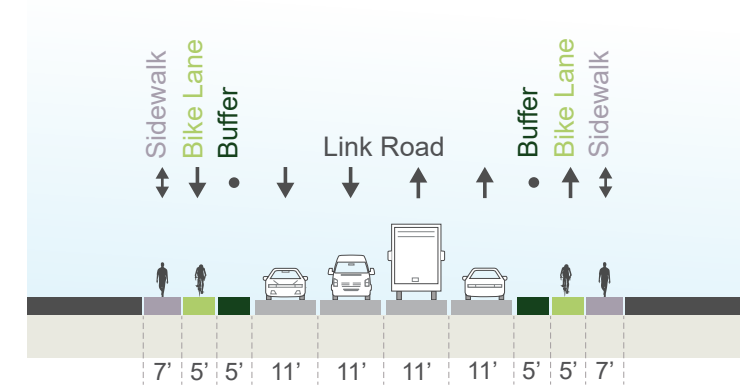


- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- - - Proposed Hike/Bike Path
- ★ Jefferson Elementary School

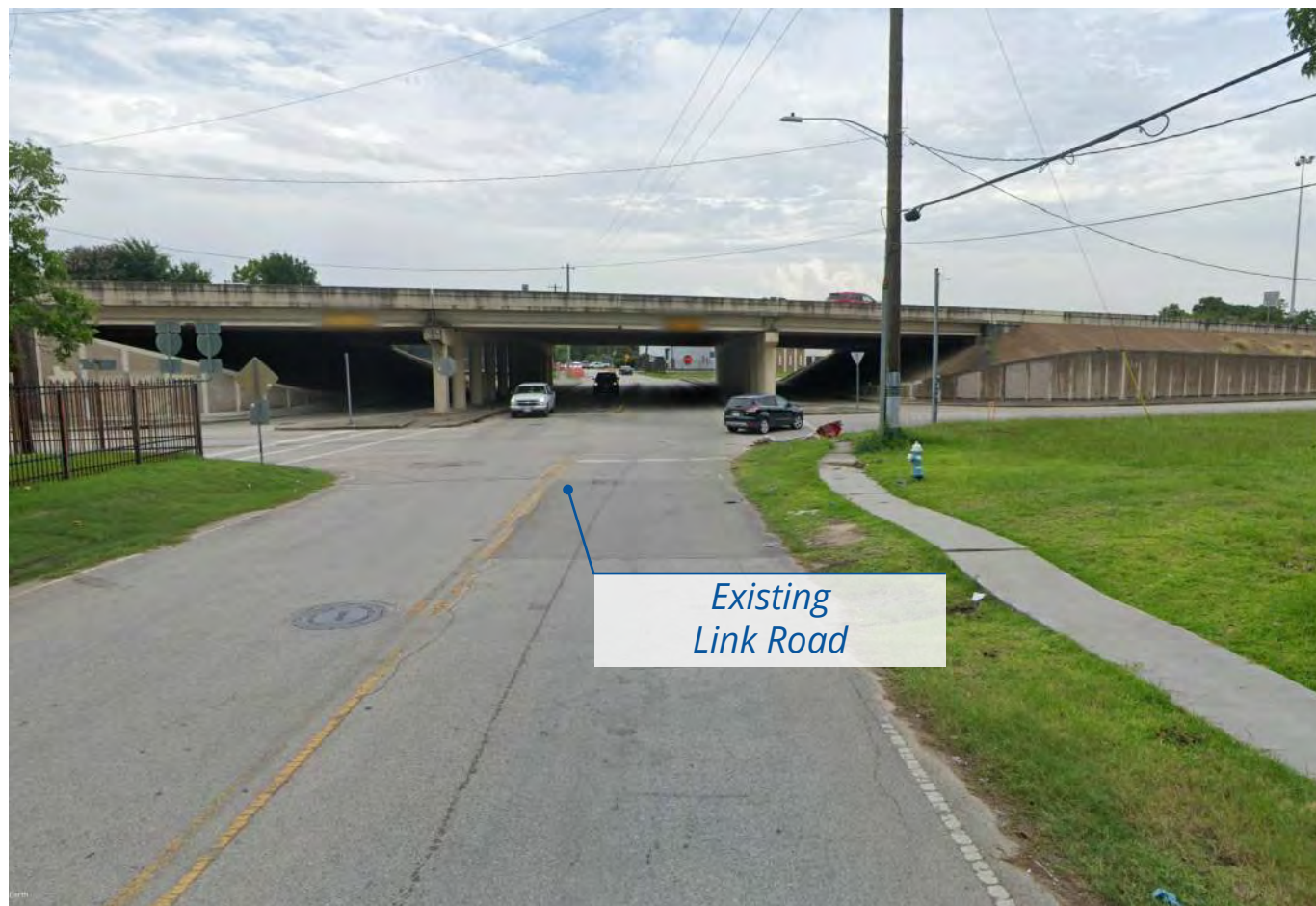
↑ NOT TO SCALE



# JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONNECTION



Proposed Section View at Link Road Looking East



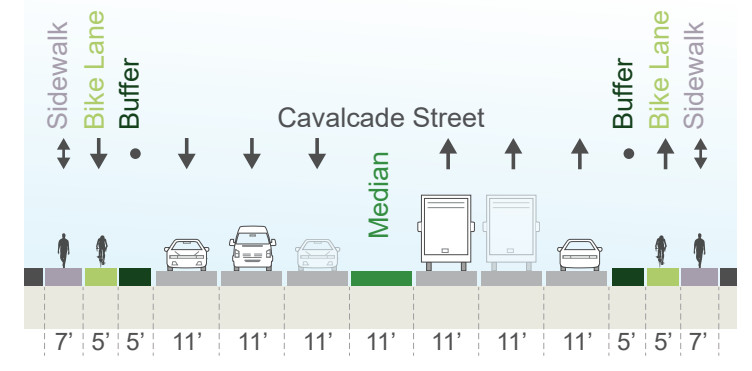
Existing I-45 and Link Road



Proposed I-45 and Link Road

NOT TO SCALE

# JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONNECTION



Proposed Section View at Cavalcade Street Looking East



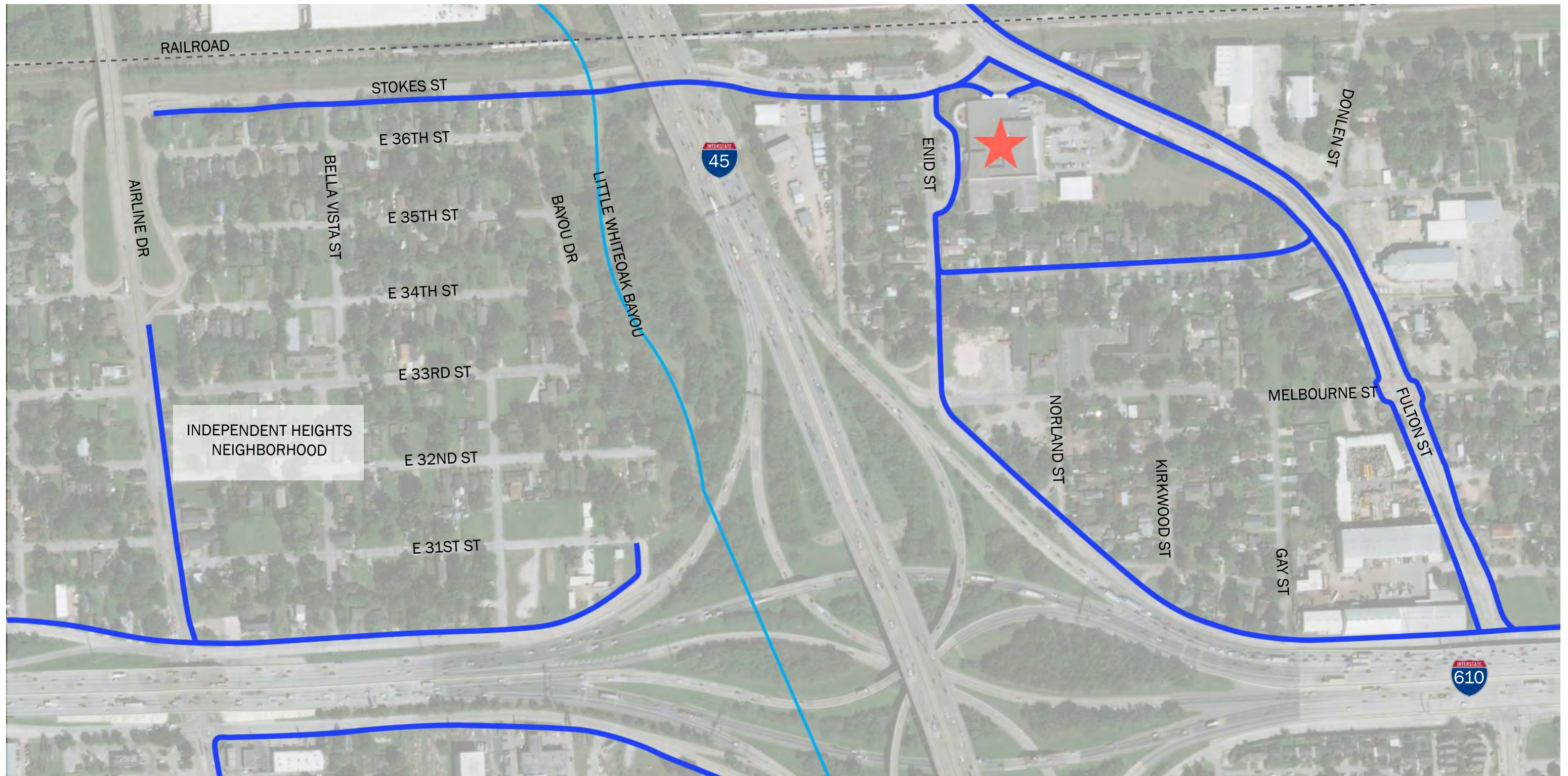
Existing I-45 and Cavalcade Street



Proposed I-45 and Cavalcade Street

NOT TO SCALE

# ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

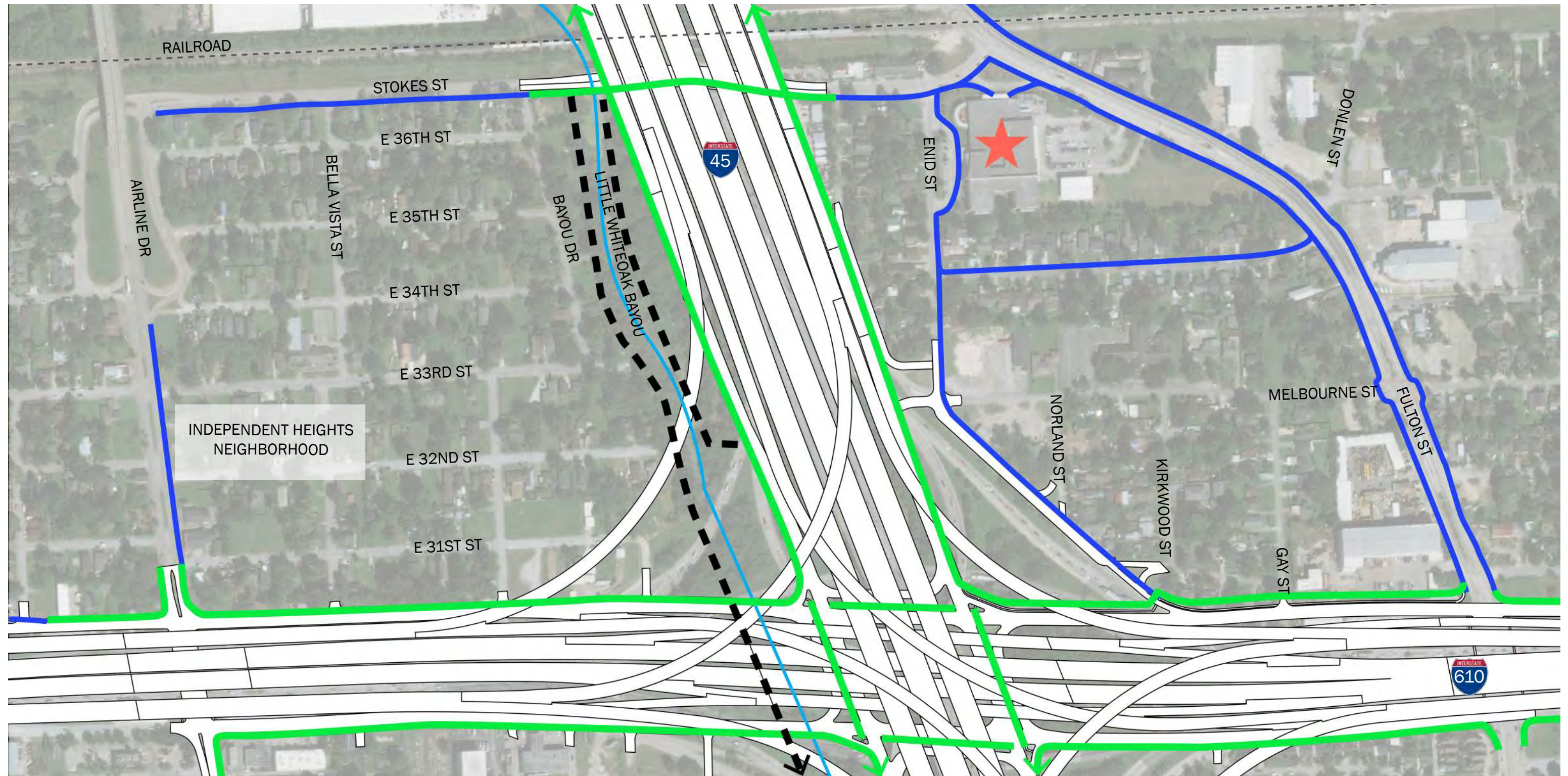


Existing Pedestrian Circulation

Roosevelt Elementary School

NOT TO SCALE

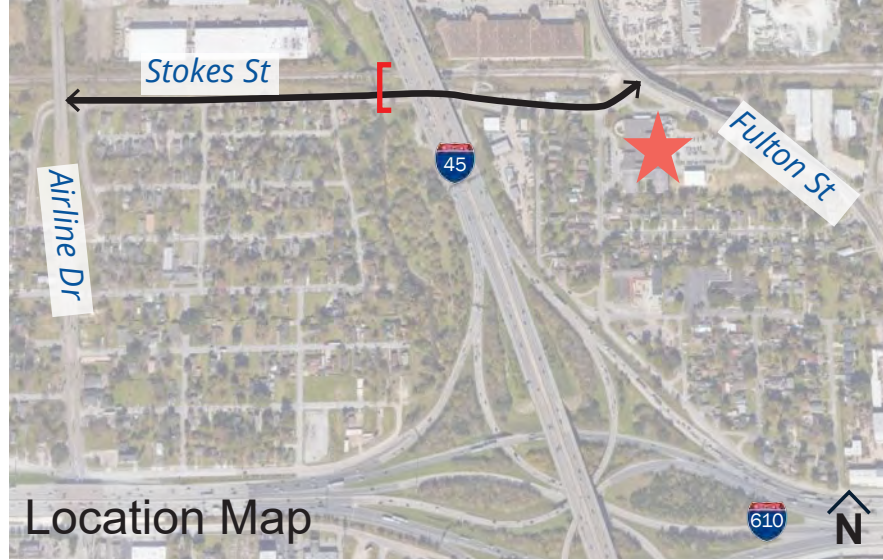
# ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



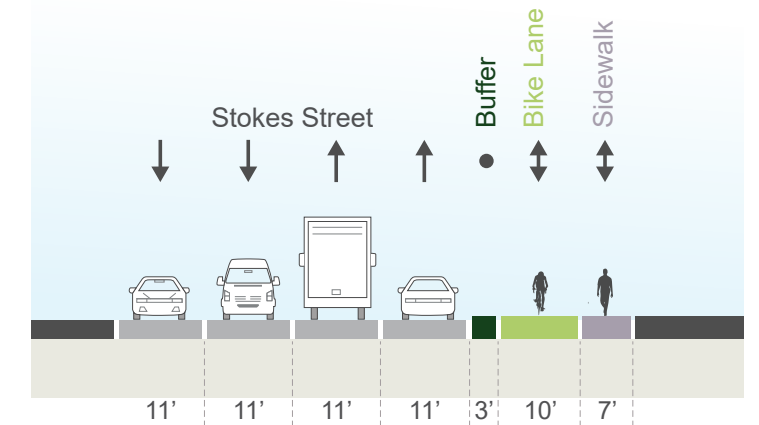
- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- Proposed Hike/Bike Path
- Roosevelt Elementary School

↑ NOT TO SCALE

# ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



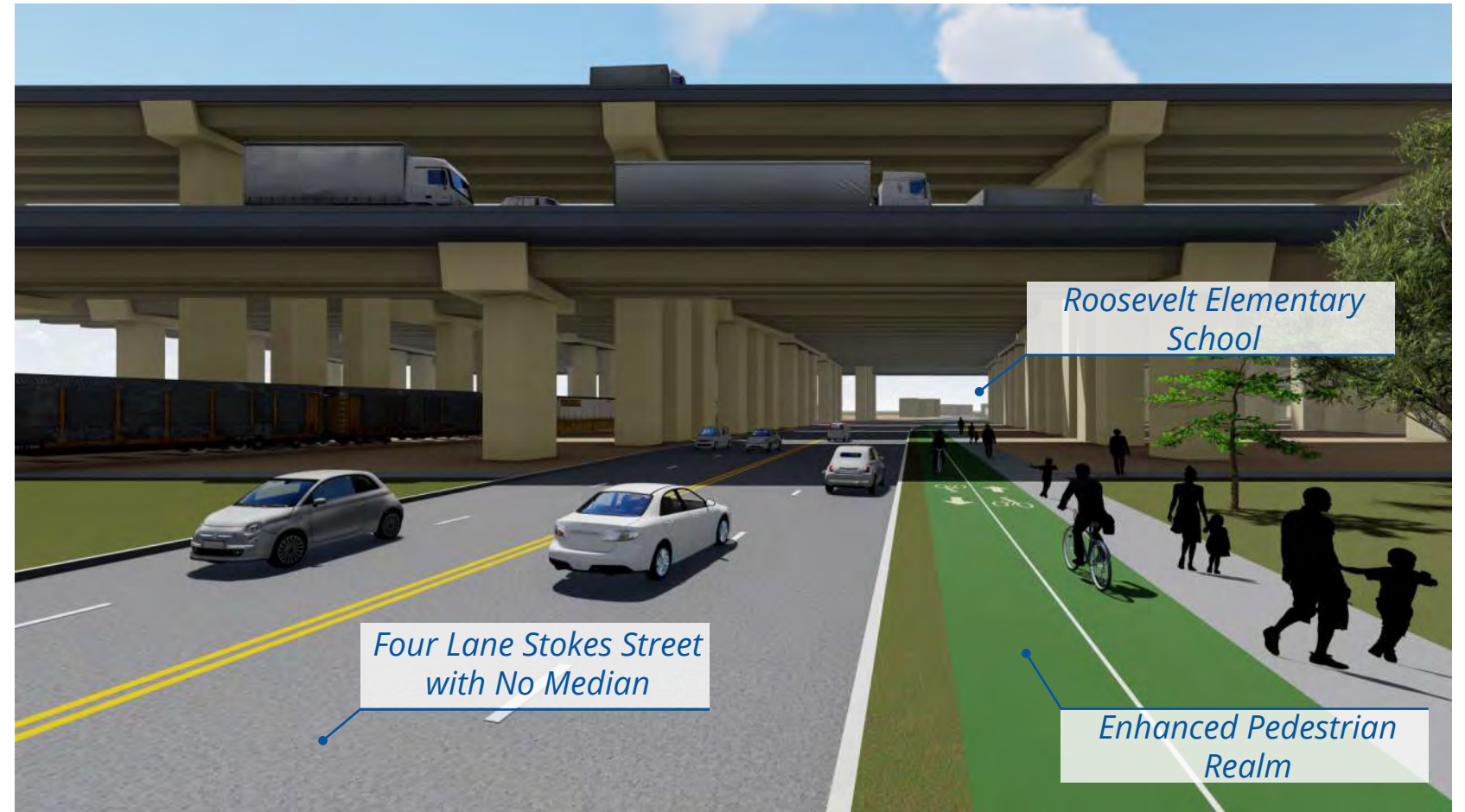
Location Map



Proposed Section View at Stokes Street Looking East



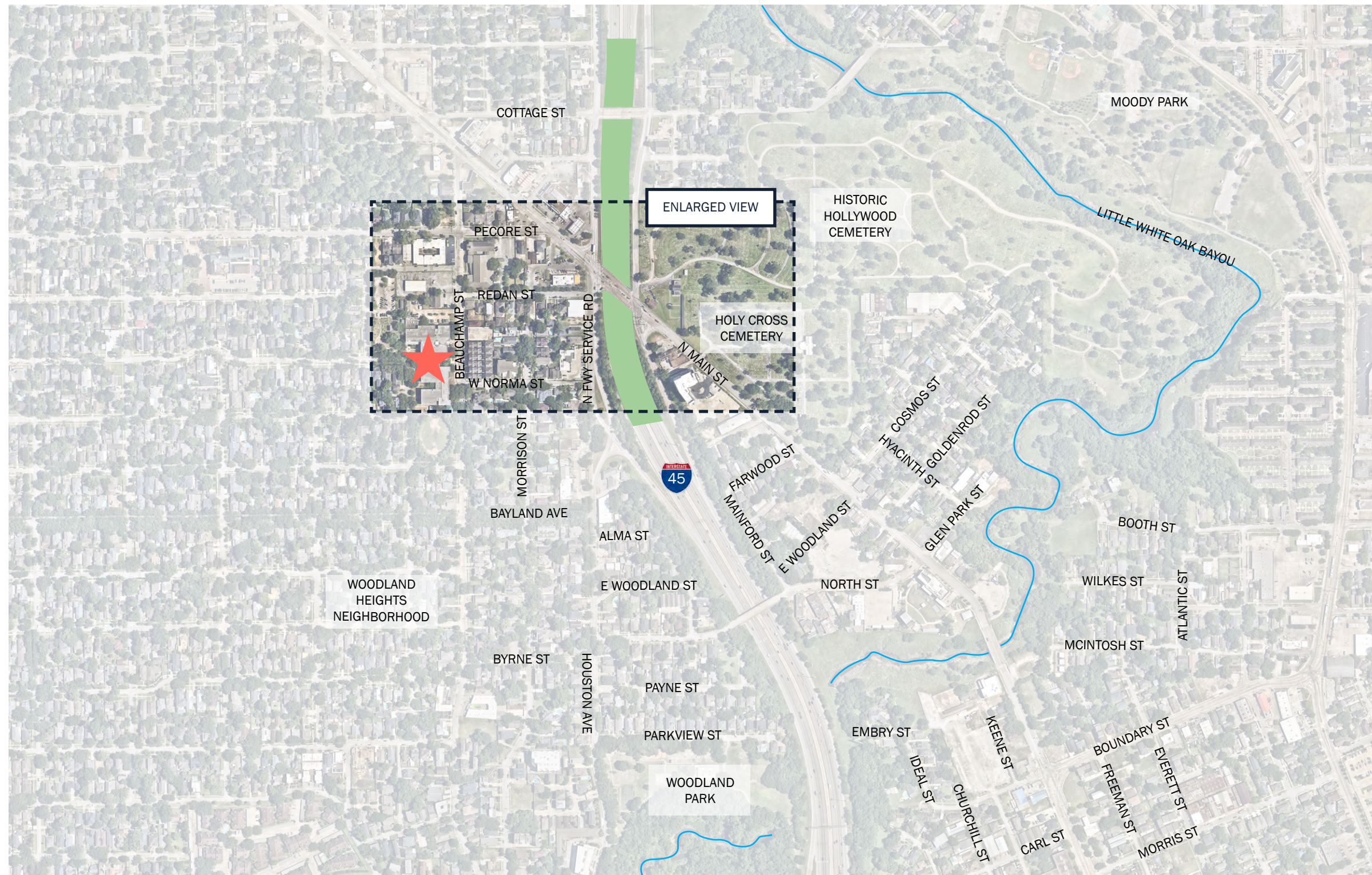
Existing I-45 and Stokes Street



Proposed I-45 and Stokes Street

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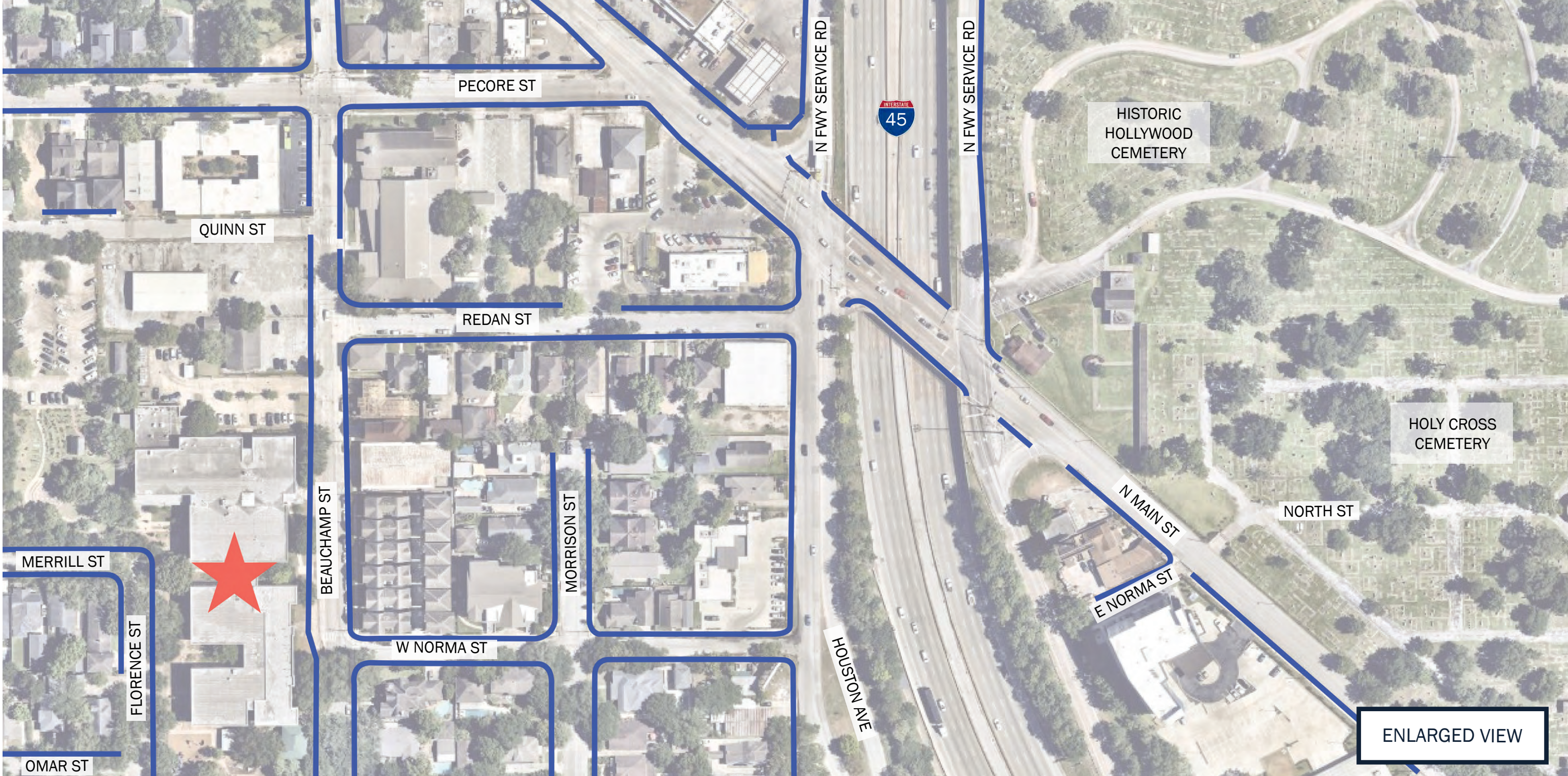
# TRAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Potential Deck Park
  Travis Elementary School

N NOT TO SCALE

# TRAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



— Existing Pedestrian Circulation    
 ★ Travis Elementary School

↑ NOT TO SCALE

# TRAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



- Existing Pedestrian Circulation
- Proposed Pedestrian Realm
- Travis Elementary School

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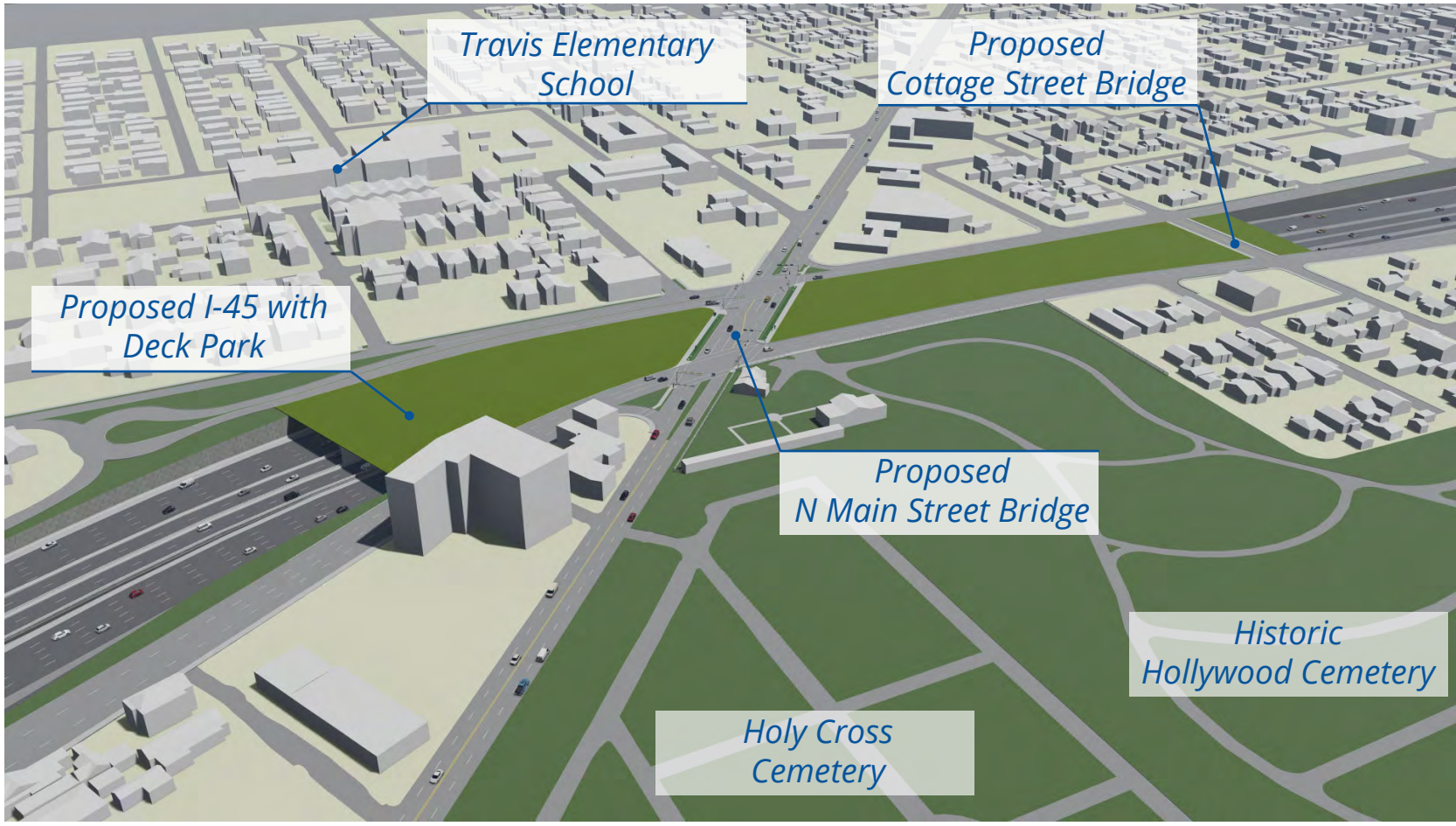
# TRAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Location Map



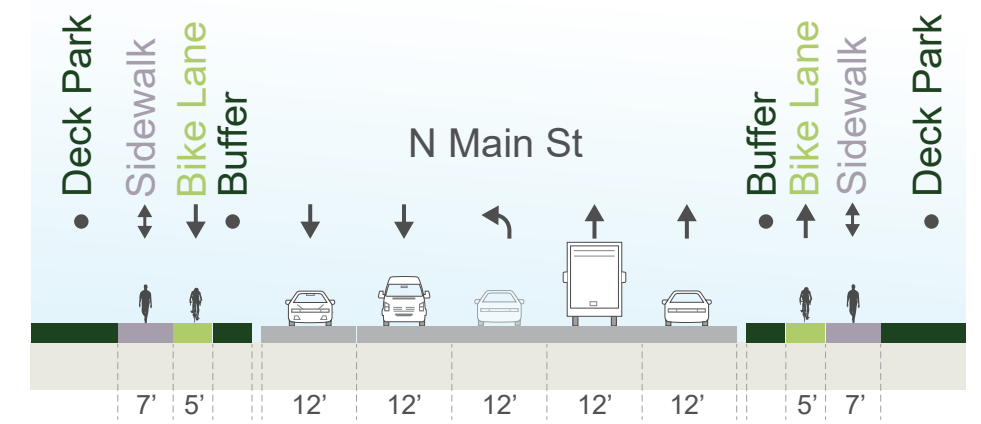
Existing I-45 at Main St and Cottage St  
(Source: Google)



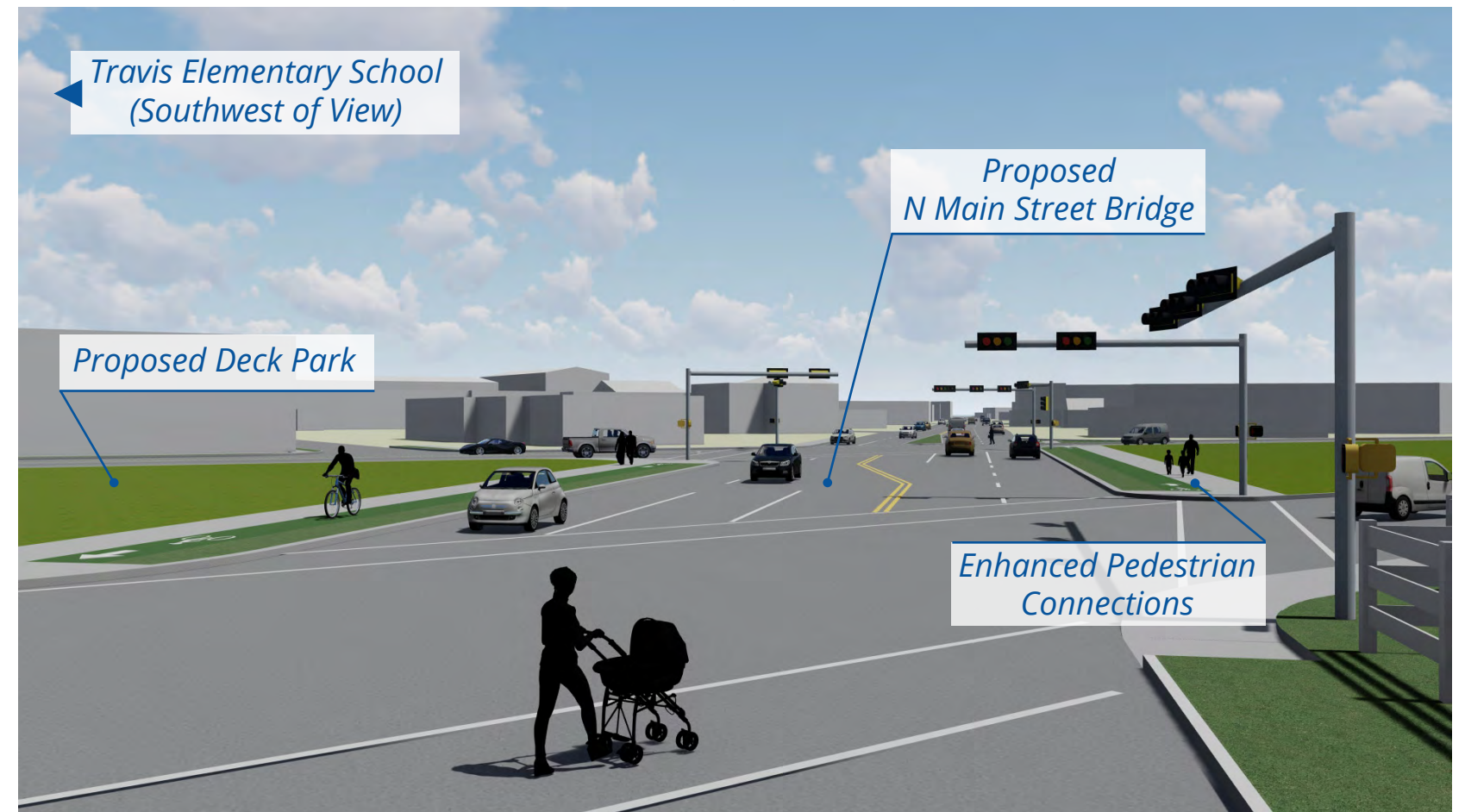
Proposed I-45 at Main St and Cottage St with Deck Park

NOT TO SCALE

# TRAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Existing N Main St Bridge over I-45  
(Source: Google)



Proposed N Main St Bridge over I-45

NOT TO SCALE

## Exhibit D

### Summary of Required Information

Timeline	Deliverable
Day 0	VRA Signed
Day 30	TxDOT will establish a publicly-available project-specific website (Relocations Article IV.2.1)
Day 45	TxDOT Provides Draft Standard Operating Procedure for LEP Resource Providers to FHWA for Review (LEP Article IV.8.g)
Day 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TxDOT Provides Draft of Survey of Displaced Individuals to FHWA (LEP Article IV.8.k)</li> <li>• FHWA Provides Comments on TxDOT's Draft Standard Operating Procedure for LEP Resource Providers (LEP Article IV.8.g)</li> </ul>
Day 75	FHWA Provides Comments to TxDOT on Draft Survey of Displaced Individuals (LEP Article IV.8.k)
Day 90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete survey on non-residential displaced entities (Article IV.2.b)</li> <li>• TxDOT Finalizes Survey of Displaced Individuals (LEP Article IV.8.k)</li> <li>• TxDOT and FHWA Finalize Standard Operating Procedure for LEP Resource Providers (LEP Article IV.8.g)</li> </ul>
Day 120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TxDOT will develop and provide LEP training to relevant staff, contractors, etc. (LEP Article IV.8.j)</li> <li>• TxDOT will have completed Survey of Displaced Individuals (LEP Article IV.8.k)</li> </ul>
Day 150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TxDOT provides relocation services to non-residential entities requesting such services following survey (Relocations Article IV.2.b)</li> <li>• TxDOT provides first Report on Compliance with LEP Survey of Displaced Individuals (LEP Article IV.8.k) – <i>Note: Additional reports due 60 days after the 150 day report</i></li> </ul>

	<i>and every 60 days thereafter until all persons are relocated.</i>
Day 180	<p>Progress Report on Overall VRA Implementation of Required TxDOT Actions (Article VI) – <i>Note: Progress reports on overall VRA implementation are due every 180 days (Article VI). TxDOT and FHWA will agree on the Progress Report format prior to submission of TxDOT’s first required report (Article VI). Reports must be accessible under Section 508 (Article V). FHWA will review and provide timely comments on each progress report to TxDOT (Article VI). Each Progress Report must include an update on all required TxDOT Actions: Reducing the NHHIP Footprint During Detailed Design; Displacements, Relocations, Housing, and Other Community Impacts; Flooding; Air Quality Mitigation; Structural Caps; Parks, Open Space, Trails, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities; Access During Construction; and Meaningful Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (Article VI).</i></p> <p>-Specific Items to be Submitted with Progress Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform Act Data for All Residential and Non-Residential Displacements (Relocations Article IV.2.a)</li> <li>• Status of non-residential relocation services (Relocations Article IV.2.b)</li> <li>• Access Plan for Essential Services (Relocations Article IV.2.c)</li> <li>• Report on acquisition or demolition of a parcel that was not included in the FEIS or ROD (Relocations Article IV.2.d)</li> <li>• As final design completed, document reduction in right-of-way leading to fewer displacements (Relocations Article IV.2.e)</li> <li>• Implementation of Affordable Housing Plan and Status of disbursement of \$30 million for</li> </ul>

	<p>affordable housing (Relocations Article IV.2.f) – <i>Note: Reporting to begin with first Progress Report after submission of the Affordable Housing Plan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on discussions with the City of Houston on the use of portions of the Project’s future surplus right-of-way for affordable and workforce housing (Relocations Article IV.2.g)</li> <li>• Report on Any Displacee Denied Benefits (Relocations Article IV.2.h)</li> <li>• Progress in Providing Enhanced Relocation Services (Relocations Article IV.2.i)</li> <li>• Update on residents or non-residential owners or renters cut off by project (Relocations Article IV.2.j)</li> <li>• Report on strategies being used for considering public input through future project development (Relocations Article IV.2.p)</li> <li>• Updates on public engagement meetings during design and construction of the project (Relocations Article IV.2.q)</li> <li>• Air quality mitigation implementation (Air Quality Mitigation Article IV.4.d)</li> <li>• Documentation of Any Delays in Providing Language Assistance Services for Relocations &amp; Acquisitions (LEP Article IV.8.e) – <i>Note: Submitted only as needed</i></li> <li>• LEP Training Reports (LEP Article IV.8.j)</li> </ul>
Day 210	TxDOT will have provided supplemental LEP services to those displaced residents and businesses who requested supplemental LEP services (LEP Article IV.8.k)
Day 365	The Parties will negotiate and finalize an updated TxDOT Language Assistance Plan

	and Policy, consistent with the U.S. Department of Justice’s 2002 LEP guidance on updating recipient LEP plans (LEP Article IV.8)
TBD	Plan on schedule and disbursement of \$30 million for affordable housing (Relocations Article IV.2.f) – <i>Note: Report is due 90 days after completion of the Affordable Housing Plan</i>
TBD	Plan for enhanced relocation services (Relocations Article IV.2.i) – <i>Note: Report is due 30 days after completion of the Enhanced Relocations Services Plan</i>
TBD	Plan for Services Needed by People Experiencing Homelessness (Relocations Article IV.2.o) – <i>Note: Report is due 30 days after completion of the Plan for Essential Services for People Experiencing Homelessness</i>
TBD	Segment and Detailed Drainage Study (Flooding Article IV.3.b) – <i>Note: Report is due with the next Progress Report after completion of the study</i>
TBD	Before submittal to the Texas Transportation Commission for consideration, FHWA must review and approve any and all Final Requests for Proposal for Design-Build Contract (Flooding Article IV.3.c)
TBD	Evaluation of potential alternative pedestrian/bicycle routes to address the loss of the existing North Street bridge (Open Space Article IV.6.j) – <i>Note: Report is due in the next Progress Report after the evaluation is completed.</i>



DOWNTOWN HOUSTON+

# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT PLAN UPDATES

MARCH 2024

# GOAL 1



## Champion major projects, initiatives and investments that improve Downtown.

### 1.3 Plan collaboratively for Downtown's evolving edges, connections, and major attractions.

**Highlight:** On February 28, Downtown Houston+ submitted a \$12 million funding application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. The funding will support planning and engineering for amenities atop the East Downtown (EaDo) Cap, which is a 30-acre concrete deck over the trenched I-69/I-45 realignment that is part of the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP). Construction of the cap is slated to begin by 2030.

For over a decade, Downtown Houston+ worked collaboratively with the TxDOT Houston District Office, the City of Houston, and community-based partners to ideate a programmed open space with multimodal accessibility plus landscape and stormwater mitigation features. However, the weight of the soil, landscaping, and other potential programmed amenities requires additional structural support above and beyond TxDOT's planned base condition. Funding from the grant sustains planning for the additional structural support needed to make one of our key "Civic Opportunities" and Downtown's core connections a reality.

In the spirit of collaboration and support of our RAISE federal funding request, Downtown Houston+ requested and received nearly 30 letters of support from our valued NHHIP partners listed below.

1. Senator John Cornyn, United States Senate
2. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, United States House of Representatives, District 18
3. Mayor John Whitmire, City of Houston
4. Senator Carol Alvarado, Texas Senate, District 6
5. Senator Borris L. Miles, Texas Senate, District 13
6. State Representative Christina Morales, Texas House of Representatives, District 145
7. Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Harris County Precinct One
8. Commissioner Adrian Garcia, Harris County Precinct Two
9. Councilman Mario Castillo, Houston City Council, Dist. H
10. Councilman Joaquin Martinez, Houston City Council, Dist. I
11. Marc Williams, Executive Director, TxDOT
12. Chuck Wemple, Executive Director, HGAC
13. Thomas J. Jasien, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, METRO
14. Shahin Naghavi, Board of Directors Chairman, East Downtown (EaDo) Management District
15. Matt Thibodeaux, Executive Director, Midtown R.A.
16. Harvey Clemons, Jr., Board Chair, Fifth Ward R.A.
17. Theola Petteway, Executive Director, OST/Almeda Redevelopment Authority
18. Jerry Davis, General Manager, Greater Southeast Management District
19. Rebecca Reyna, Executive Director, Greater Northside Management District
20. Carme Williams, Chair, Greater Black Chamber of Commerce
21. Dr. Laura Murillo, President and CEO, Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
22. James R. Crane, Owner and Chairman, Houston Astros
23. Jessica O'Neill, President of Business Operations, Houston Dynamo/Dash
24. Tilman Fertitta, Chairman and CEO, Houston Rockets
25. Steve Kean, President and CEO, Greater Houston Partnership
26. Michael Heckman, President and CEO, Houston First
27. Anne Olson, President, Buffalo Bayou Partnership
28. Kathryn Lott, President and Park Director, Discovery Green
29. Robby Robertson, President and CEO, Joyride Houston

#### Participating Agencies:





## GOAL 2

Enhance and maintain a comfortable, welcoming, and well-managed public realm.

### 2.3 Quickly and pro-actively respond to blighting influences such as graffiti and building damage.

#### Highlight:

Maintaining the appearance and cleanliness of the public realm is one of the most important priorities of the Operations Team. The removal of graffiti, which we define as markers, paint, writing, stickers, or posters on public spaces without permission, is a daily activity for our cleaning ambassadors. We strive to have all graffiti removed within four business hours from the time the graffiti was encountered or reported. If the graffiti is on a building or private property, the Operations Team will first contact the property to receive permissions for our team to remove it. Over the past two months (Jan-Feb), our teams have removed 1,358 instances of graffiti.

#### Participating Agency:



### 2.4 Broadly address the needs of people experiencing homelessness and the associated impacts.

#### Highlight:

On the morning of Thursday, February 29, one of our Downtown Public Safety Guides encountered an unresponsive homeless male in the 300 block of Fannin Street. SEAL Security was called and arrived on scene to find the man not breathing. 911 was immediately called and the SEAL Officer started performing chest compressions on the individual. By the time EMS arrived, the SEAL Officer was able to revive the individual and get him to breathe again. EMS transported the man to an area hospital for medical treatment.

#### Participating Agency:





# GOAL 3

Drive vibrancy through improved street-level connectivity, a commitment to walkability, and inclusive programming strategies.

### 3.7 Utilize public art and other place enhancement strategies to improve walkability where built conditions limit storefront activations.

**Highlight:** In partnership with Harris County Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis, HDMD management is supporting the production of a third phase for the mural program. Our engagement as a supporting partner for this effort is significantly reduced from prior years. HDMD provided only limited support on recruiting buildings for this phase and has no financial commitment to the project. There will be a total of nine (9) murals painted between Mar 20-29, with an unveiling ceremony to occur at the March 30 Market Square Park Farmer’s Market. Central Houston Civic Improvement entered into an agreement with Harris County to serve as the fiscal sponsor for the program, and the County’s commitment includes \$80,000 for supporting materials such as web and print content, event production, and unforeseen costs to ensure that the HDMD has no fiscal outlay as part of the continuation of the mural program.

**Participating Agency:**



### 3.11 Plan and implement an events and programming strategy that appeals to diverse audiences and drives vibrancy in strategic areas.

**Highlight:** On February 10, DTH+ held its inaugural Lunar New Year festival in the Historic District celebrating Houston’s diverse Asian American populations. To better understand and explain the event’s potential to brighten a traditional post-holiday lull, Engagement and Research teams collaborated on a data collection and analysis mission. Our team collected 600+ intercept surveys, partnered with business to report induced sales data, and analyzed data derived from cell phones.

**Key takeaways:**

- 5,200+ unique attendees,
- 73% of attendees went to Downtown food & beverage establishments before or afterward,
- Each group spent on average \$94 on food & beverages in Downtown,
- 24% arrived by walking, transit, bike, or rideshare, and
- Bravery Chef Hall partnered with DTH+ on Lunar New Year promotions and reported a 75% sales increase compared to typical Saturday receipts.

**Participating Agency:**



# GOAL 4

Foster a vital and thriving economy through business growth, residential expansion, and enhanced reasons to be in Downtown.

## 4.2 Engage with local partners such as the City of Houston, Houston First and the GHP to improve the national image and reputation of Downtown Houston.

**Highlight:** In collaboration with the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), our Economic Development team is spearheading the creation of Houston's first-ever comprehensive inventory of energy transition companies. This initiative, inspired by DTH+ over a year ago, will not only document these companies but also pinpoint those located Downtown and speak to the specific energy transition companies Downtown attracts. This partnership positions Houston, and particularly Downtown, as a prime location for companies and leaders driving the next wave of energy innovation.

With guidance from our Thrive Collaborative Committee, DTH+ and GHP intend to make public this detailed picture of Downtown's energy ecosystem within the broader regional context. Publishing this information will allow DTH+ and GHP to effectively showcase the unique advantages Houston and Downtown offer to energy transition businesses. As an early return from this effort, DTH+ is also involved in an active recruitment project for a firm looking to move its corporate headquarters from the pacific northwest and will host them in Houston in mid-March.

Participating Agencies:



## 4.7 Support efforts to build a Downtown community that is home to a diverse population.

**Highlight:** With 25% of Downtown's employment base working in the service industry and similar jobs, providing access to attainable housing is a cornerstone of a healthy and sustainable Downtown economy. DTH+ worked with real estate developer Urban Genesis and property management company Asset Living to publicize phase one of The Warehouse District apartment community at 813 McKee Street, with future phases slated for April and June. Locating in a walkable area in a major employment center is key to providing what the developer calls "essential housing," keeping housing cost within range for people earning modest incomes, as well as college students at the nearby University of Houston-Downtown campus.

Participating Agencies:



## GOAL 5

Develop a hivemind of intelligence and goodwill by genuinely engaging and convening stakeholders.

**5.1 Develop a representative engagement structure that provides stakeholders the opportunity to inform decision making and advise on the direction of Downtown.**

**Highlight:** On Feb. 20, DTH+ hosted a joint collaborative committee meeting for CONNECT, ENHANCE, and THRIVE committees with Texas Department of Highways (TxDOT) reps updating participants on the North Houston Highway Improvement Program (NHHIP). Committee members asked questions, received clarifications, and gave input directly to TxDOT. Attendees also included team members tasked with producing a DTH+ highway messaging toolkit to equip Downtown stakeholders with information and visual communications tools. Speaking confidently and accurately about access, impact mitigation, and mobility strategies is one way we can ensure Downtown continues to be seen as the beating heart of our region.

**Participating Agencies:**



**5.7 Develop programs and collateral to orient new companies, employees, and residents to Downtown.**

**Highlight:** Following a successful 2023 pilot and back by popular demand, the Market Square Park Farmer's Market is expanding with spring & fall seasons on March 30. After an RFP process, Central City Co-Op, Houston's oldest local, sustainable, organic food co-op, was selected as 2024 market producer. Weekly Saturday morning markets with holiday-themed celebrations and family-friendly activities not only bring first-time visitors to Downtown's Historic District, but also strengthen community ties among residents. Activating Market Square Park from 10 am to 2 pm also helps drive off-peak vibrancy. Along with other park programming, the market will support the launch of a new restaurant kiosk operator and the area's storefront economy.

**Participating Agency:**

