

Monday, October 13, 2003

The Metro Solutions plan to greatly improve transit in the Houston region will come to a vote on November 4. To help increase understanding of the proposal and of transit's place in the greater transportation picture the Gulf Coast Institute will publish a series of educational bulletins.

Mobility Myths

"Building more roads is the solution to Houston's congestion," Fact: "It would be almost impossible to attempt to maintain constant congestion level with road construction only," states the recent Texas Transportation Institute Urban Mobility Study. In fact, even though Houston added freeway and principal arterial street lane miles at a much higher rate (84 percent) than population (45 percent) during the past two decades, Houston's congestion has increased 175 percent over that same time period (measured by Annual Delay, or extra time spent traveling)¹.

Houston Mobility Facts

Houstonians travel more miles per day than there are miles between the earth and the sun. The distance between the earth and the sun is about 93 million miles. Houstonians drive about 156 million miles per day¹.

Economic Benefits

Dallas's light rail has resulted in \$1.3 billion of private investment around its rail corridors².

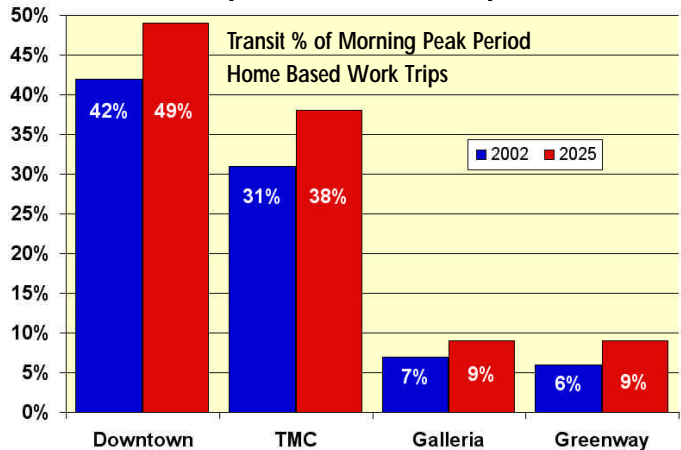
Light Rail Playing Field

The FY2004 federal appropriations act passed by the US House of Representatives states, "None of the funds in this Act shall be made available for the design, construction, or maintenance of any segment of a light rail system in Houston that has not been specifically approved by a majority of the participating voters in the Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority service area in a referendum." Houston is the only city in the nation with such a funding restriction in the Act. Consequently, Houston is absent from the funding list that divides more than \$1.2 billion federal dollars among 25 cities. Houston's smaller neighbor Dallas is slotted to receive \$30 million next year³. Since it began building light rail in 1988, Dallas is estimated to have received \$493 million federal funds for light rail⁴.

100 Percent Solution Plan

The METRO Solutions opposition cites the "100 Percent Solutions Plan" being developed by the Houston-Galveston Area Council as an alternative to METRO Solutions. However, the 100 Percent

Metro share of peak-hour work trips



Transit serves 42 percent of all morning peak period, home based work trips to downtown, 31 percent to the Medical Center, 7 percent to the Galleria, and 6 percent to Greenway plaza. All areas would be served with the METRO Solutions light rail, helping transit market shares in each location to significantly increase by 2025⁶.

Solutions Plan not only includes METRO Solutions, but includes an expanded version of METRO Solutions with more rail and bus than in METRO's plan. The METRO Solutions transit plan is a part of the 100 Percent Solution Plan that already has identified funding sources⁵.

Correction: Transportation Bulletin 1 stated that METRO would complete 22 miles of rail and its entire bus expansion in the first ten years. It will actually complete 22 miles of rail and only 33 percent of its bus expansion in the first ten years.

1. 2003 Urban Mobility Report, Texas Transportation Institute. September 2003. <http://mobility.tamu.edu>.

2. DART website, <http://www.dart.org/newsroommain.asp?zeon=economicimpact>

3. US House Resolution 2989, "Transportation, Treasury, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act," 2004.

4. Dallas federal funding dollars from a discussion with Morgan Lyons, DART, 7 October 2003.

5. *The 100 Percent Solution Plan (presentation to Transportation Policy Council)* Houston-Galveston Area Council, September 2003.

6. Metropolitan Transportation Authority of Harris County. Based on Houston-Galveston Area Council data and travel forecasts for METRO Solutions with additional 72 Miles of rail. Based on transit linked trips.