

Friday, October 24, 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.

## What is the Metro Solutions Plan?

### The vote

The Metro Solutions plan that goes to a vote on November 4 addresses rail, buses, and roads over a long term, roughly until 2025. Metro seeks approval of the entire plan, and also authorization for \$640 million in bonds to help fund the first 10 years of construction for the system.

The ballot specifically notes there will be no increase in Metro's portion of the sales and use tax. Metro would go back to the voters as early as 2008 to seek approval of financing for the remaining portions of the system.

### The complete plan

#### Rail

The plan calls for a total of 72.8 miles of new rail service, including 64.8 miles of light rail and 8 miles of commuter rail. There will be rail service to both airports, more than 50 new rail stations, and increased access to activity centers, such as Uptown/Galleria. All of the light rail will be connected to the existing Main Street line. The commuter rail segment would extend from the foot of the Main Street light rail line southwest to Fort Bend County.

#### Bus

The plan calls for 50 percent more bus service, including new park and ride stations, faster "Signature Express" service connecting major activity centers, and more local bus routes, as well as longer hours of service and new transit centers. The Signature Express buses will include, for example, a bus from downtown to Elgin/Westheimer that would run every ten minutes at peak hour out Westheimer to Highway 6. The

expanded bus fleet will include low-emission hybrid diesel/electric buses.

#### Roads

The ballot guarantees that 25 percent of all sales tax revenues will go for street and road improvements "and related projects" through 2014.

### First ten years

#### Rail

By 2012, Metro proposes to complete construction of 22 miles of new light rail service.

This will include a northern extension of the Main Street line

out to Northline Mall, a line going east from downtown and then south along Dowling to Griggs Rd at Loop 610, service from downtown east to the Magnolia Transit Center, and a line extending west from the Main Street Wheeler station along the Southwest Freeway and Westpark to the Hillcroft Transit Center. The total capital costs for this ten-year rail program will be \$1.72 billion.

#### Bus

Thirty-three percent of the bus expansion will be completed in the first 10 years. The total capital costs for the ten-year bus program will be \$1.69 billion, roughly equivalent to the rail program.

#### Rail

- Additional 72 miles of rail
- New light rail lines (64.8 miles)
- New commuter line (8 miles)
- Increased access to activity centers
- Rail service to both airports
- More than 50 new rail stations

#### Bus

- 50% increase in bus services
- New Signature Express Service (a fast, all-day crosstown service)
- Approximately 44 new bus routes
- Longer hours of service
- 250+ miles of 2-way Park & Ride service, 9 new Park & Ride lots
- Increased access to activity centers
- New and upgraded transit centers
- Over 1,000 new miles of bus service

## The first ten years: Where the money will come from and where it goes

