

Friday, October 31, 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.

Questionable Assertions

METRO Solutions opponents have sent out a glossy flyer with the title "Brace yourself for the great Texas train robbery of 2003¹." It makes a number of assertions that are questionable.

Statement: "Does it concern you that Mayor Lee Brown has appointed enough members to control the Metro Board?"

Truth: The Texas State Legislature sets the size and composition of the board at 9 members, 5 (56 percent) to be appointed by the City of Houston Mayor. A significant majority of the people in the Metro Service Area - 69 percent - live in the City.

Statement: "By Metro's own admission, their plan could actually increase congestion."

Truth: Metro says they have made no such "admission."

Statement: "We must reject Metro's delusions and adopt the Houston-Galveston Area Council's 100% solution."

Truth: This implies the H-GAC theoretical study, called the "100 Percent Plan," is actually proposed for adoption by H-GAC; it is not. The "100 Percent Plan" is a financially and physically unrestrained study, not a plan and not on the table for adoption. Further, the statement appears to indicate that the Plan does not contain the entire Metro Solutions plan as part of its possible strategies. It does contain the entire Metro plan, which is part of the reason the study arrives at its conclusions about reducing congestion.

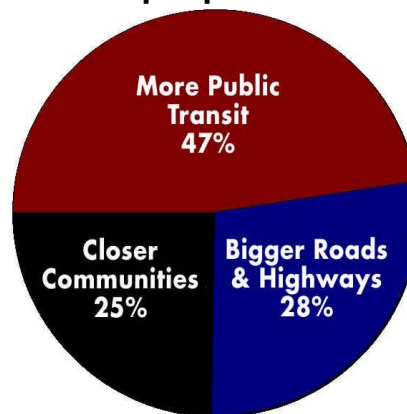
Statement: "We can't have a 100% Solution unless we reject Metro's Delusions."

Truth: 100 Percent Plan is not an alternative to Metro Solutions, but contains Metro Solutions, as noted above. Further, approximately 50 percent of rail and 40 percent of bus capital expenditures over the next 10 years will come from the federal government. Much of that money is slotted for transit-only projects and would go to other cities should Houston not have the proposed public transit projects.

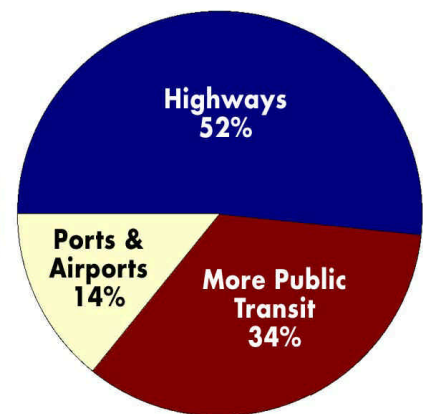
Houston Mobility Facts

Houstonians drive more vehicle miles per day than any other city (37.6 miles) in the nation and their household transportation expenses are the third highest (\$9,566 per year). Philadelphia's residents, with about 970 miles of rail transit, drive 18.4 miles per day and spend \$6,606 on household transportation expenditures. New York residents, with

What people want



"100 Percent Plan"



According to the Houston Area Survey⁵, (chart at left) 47 percent of Harris County residents think "More Public Transit" is the solution to mobility issues, and only 28 percent think "Bigger Roads & Highways" is the answer. Yet the 100 Percent Plan (chart at right) as presented by the Houston-Galveston Area Council on October 13 almost flips those numbers.

2,640 miles of rail transit, drive 15.7 miles per day and spend \$7,295 per year on household transportation expenses. Atlanta residents, with 100 miles of rail transit, drive 35.6 miles per day and spend \$6,577 per year on household transportation expenses².

Light Rail

There are currently 17 cities across the nation with light rail projects under construction. They include Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Little Rock, AR; Los Angeles, CA; Memphis, TN; Minneapolis, MN; New Orleans, LA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; Salt Lake City, UT; San Diego, CA; San Francisco, CA; San Jose, CA; Tacoma, WA. There is currently one city in the nation, Los Angeles, constructing commuter rail³.

Mobility Choice

Fifty-two percent of Dallas's light-rail riders are "choice" riders, meaning they have cars and choose to take the train⁴.

For more on the 100 Percent Plan:

<http://www.h-gac.com/HGAC/Departments/Transportation/default.htm>

Sources

1. Legend: pd pol ad Harris County Republican Party.
2. Household Transportation Expenditures (Metropolitan Area) and vehicle miles traveled (Urban Area) from the Surface Transportation Policy Project, Transportation Costs and the American Dream, July 2003. Rail Transit Miles (Urban Area) from the Federal Transit Administration.
3. American Public Transportation Association, 2003 Public Transportation Fact Book. Data as of July 2001.
4. Morgan Lyons at Dallas Area Rapid Transit.
5. Klineberg, Stephen H. "The Houston Area Survey," 1982- present. <http://www.houstonareasurvey.org>.