



**Guests**

CM Amanda Edwards  
Rhonda Sauter, Citizens Assistance Office, DON  
Mayra Hypolite, Dept. of Neighborhoods  
Rob Lazaro, Public Works Dept.  
Stana Juarez, Public Works Dept.  
Randall Ellis, METRO

**Super Neighborhood Representatives**

Philip Salerno, SNC 05  
Ed Browne, SNC 10  
Alicia Nuzzie, SNC 12  
Steve Ashy, SNC 17  
Michael Huffmaster, SNC 18  
Jane West, SNA Chairwoman, SNC 22  
Mike Van Dusen, SNC 22  
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25  
Sandra Rodriguez, SN 27  
Roland Gramajo, SNC 27  
John Nienhuser, SNC 32  
Marcy Williams, SNC 36  
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37  
Stan Sarman, SNC 43  
Kathy Blueford-Daniels, SNC 55  
Albert Coleman, SNC 49/50  
Diana Pfeifer, SNC 51  
Jim Honey, SNC 62  
Thomas Wang, SNC 62  
Kristy Bridges, SNC 66  
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66  
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83

**I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2016 Meeting:**

Motion to approve the Minutes from the October meeting made by Marcy Williams subject to amendment to reflect that Sandra Rodriguez from SNC 27 attended the November meeting, seconded by Tomaro Bell, **carried** unanimously.

**II. Report from the Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee (Marcy Williams (SNC 36), Cindy Chapman (SNC 37), and Tomaro Bell (SNC 83) nominated Michael Huffmaster from SNC 18 (Briar Forest) to serve as 2017 Chair, and Kathy Blueford-Daniels from SN 55 (Greater Fifth Ward) to serve as Vice-Chair. Since Steve Ashy is the middle of a two-year term as Secretary, the committee did not nominate anyone to fill that position. The nominations of the Nominating Committee were accepted.

### **III. Old Business**

#### **A. Update on Plan Houston Survey**

CM Amanda Edwards spoke about the opportunity for community in-pur to the city's budget process via the Plan Houston Survey, and appealed to all SN Councils to urge all their constituent organizations and their members to take the Plan Houston survey by visiting [www.planhouston.org](http://www.planhouston.org). CM Edwards reported that the response rate to date has been fairly low and that the period for taking the survey had been extended to Friday, December 16th.

#### **B. Update on Amendments to Chapter 26, the Off-Street Parking Ordinance**

Jane West reported that she, Michael Huffmaster, and Steve Ashy met with representatives of the COH Planning and Development Department, and that pursuant to public comment much of which came from the SN community, the following draft amendments aimed at providing the Planning Director administrative authority to provide exemptions from the city's minimum parking requirements of up to five parking spaces have been revised to include: (1) a public notification requirement; (2) a 30-day public comment period; (3) a requirement that administrative exemptions will be available only to existing businesses seeking to expand their foot prints, and (4) a requirement that the Planning Director make a finding that the exemption will not adversely impact neighboring properties. SNA representatives have asked that this last requirement be modified such that the Director must find no adverse impact to streets within 1,000 ft radius of the business seeking the exemption. The 1,000 ft request is based on the ability of businesses to use spaces located up to 1,000 ft away to satisfy their minimum parking requirements. SNA representatives have also asked that businesses be required to post maps showing the number and location of the parking spaces provided to satisfy the city's minimum parking requirements. This request is being made because once a business has received a certificate of occupancy, the COH has no process to check or insure that businesses are continuing to satisfy the COH's minimum parking requirement. Instead, the COH relies on citizen complaints, but acknowledges that citizens have no way to know if or when a business stops satisfying the minimum parking requirements. The COH also acknowledges that there is no process currently in place for the COH to investigate and address citizen complaints about parking.

#### **C. Update on proposed amendments to Chapter 33 regarding the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan and the Bicycle Master Plan**

Jane West reported that SNA representatives have been meeting with council members, and working together with other members of the Houston Coalition for Complete Streets to persuade the Planning Department to agree to revise the proposed amendments to Chapter 33 to address and resolve the issues raised in the Chapter 33 resolution approved at the October SNA meeting. The absence of sufficient right of way on many major thoroughfares for implementing bikeways without trade-offs (e.g., reducing the number of traffic lanes, narrowing the width of traffic lanes, narrowing or eliminating medians and/or landscaping between the sidewalk and the back of the curb, eliminating or reducing the number of on-street parking spaces, or widening sidewalks to create "side paths" to be shared by bicycles and pedestrians); the need for annual review of the BMP together with the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan; the need to provide a way for members of the public to propose amendments to the BMP; codification of the Bicycle Advisory Committee to insure that it operates in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act; and the need for robust public engagement before streets are amended to incorporate bike lanes.

#### **IV. New Business and Committee Reports**

##### **A. Liveability (Transportation and Parks) (Steve Ashy):**

Steve Ashy reported that CM Mike Laster has created a Shopping Cart Task Force to address the issue of abandoned shopping carts that are littering streets, esplanades, apartment complexes, ditches, etc. The Task Force is co-chaired by District J CM Mike Laster and District I CM Robert Gallegos. The Task Force is composed of city council staff members from CM Laster's and CM Gallegos' offices, representatives from all the major grocery retailers, the Houston Apartment Association, and the SNA. Members of the Task Force agree that a solution is needed, but no agreement has yet been reached as to which of many proposed solutions should be pursued. Anyone with ideas for solutions is invited to contact Steve Ashy at [steve.ashy09@gmail.com](mailto:steve.ashy09@gmail.com).

##### **B. Infrastructure (Flooding and Drainage) (Michael Huffmaster)**

Michael Huffmaster reported that a petition has been drafted to urge elected officials to address flooding issues across the City of Houston. The petition calls for a regional approach to the issue. This regional approach would require participation from city, state, and national government agency representatives. A regional approach would also include representatives from various Houston area organizations whose focus is flooding and drainage. The objective is to form a broad based coalition to discuss the issue and identify solutions. Currently, there are two versions of the petition available on the internet: one at [www.drainagecoalition.org](http://www.drainagecoalition.org) and the other at Care2Petitions-End Houston Flooding posted by a group called Citizen Solution to Flooding.

##### **C. Growth and Economic Development (Ivory Mayhorn)**

1. Report and consideration of SNA participation in Housing Working Group  
No Report.
2. Report and consideration of SNA participation in Age Friendly/ Liveable Communities Planning effort. No Report.

##### **D. Health and Public Safety (Tomaro Bell)**

Tomaro Bell reported that the recent expansion of the Civility Ordinance to the part of the Northside Village SN (SN 51) has sparked an interest among some city council members and community groups to amend the Civility Ordinance to extend its reach to the entire city and to all of the public right-of-way, not just sidewalks. Ms. Bell also reported that increasing uncivility exemplified by aggressive panhandling, public intoxication and drug use, and street crime has motivated at least two areas of town that do not yet have SN Councils to consider forming SN Councils (i.e., Midtown and Willow Meadows/Willowbend).

##### **E. Transitions and Regulatory Affairs (Jane West)**

Jane West reported that the Parking Management Division of the city's Administrative and Regulatory Affairs Department has posted for public comment draft amendments to

the Residential Permit Parking Ordinance. SNA and other community representatives have been meeting with Parking Management representatives to insure no adverse impacts to residential neighborhoods.

Ms. West also reported that in the wake of September 14th meeting with Mayor Turner and his staff, the DON is working to update its SN webpage in response to the first recommendation from the SNA's Annual Report (i.e., "Create a City of Houston web-based platform for housing basic information about each of the active Super Neighborhoods, e.g., bylaws, officers and their contact information, meeting information including date, time, and place of regular meetings, historical agendas and meeting minutes, as well as links to current and past projects, plans, and initiatives."), and that the Planning Department is working to update its list of civil clubs and organizations. Ms. West urged representatives of each SN Council to make sure that the information that the DON and the Planning Department have about their CN Councils and their constituent organizations is current.

## **V. Presentations: High Speed Rail Watch (30 minutes)**

Philip Salerno (SNC 5) and Alicia Nuzzie (SNC 12) discussed the efforts of Houston High Speed Rail Watch to watch, gather, and share information and to build community consensus regarding the efforts to implement High Speed Rail from Dallas to Houston.

What is Houston High-Speed Rail Watch?

Houston High-Speed Rail Watch (HHSRW) is a group of civic leaders who live in neighborhoods along the Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail lines. HHSRW has been monitoring the proposed Texas Bullet Train or Houston-to-Dallas high-speed rail (HSR) project since early 2015, when the routes originally presented for HSR to reach downtown Houston threatened many established neighborhoods. HHSRW membership includes representatives from Inwood Forest, Oak Forest, Garden Oaks, Independence Heights, West End, First Ward, Old Sixth Ward, and Super Neighborhoods 5, 12, 22, and 51. HHSRW's mission is to advocate for smart connectivity between Houston's high-speed rail station and downtown and to protect established neighborhoods. HHSRW is active in following and researching details and updates regarding HSR. HHSRW invites other groups to join its effort by supporting and joining its advocacy effort. For more information about Houston High Speed Rail Watch, please visit [www.houstonhsrwatch.org](http://www.houstonhsrwatch.org)

### **Executive Summary**

If the proposed Texas Bullet Train or HSR plans were to move forward, HHSRW advocates for an elevated METRORail (light rail line) that would run down the center lanes of I-10 to connect HSR's end terminus near the Northwest Transit Center with downtown. HHSRW believes that this light rail connection would unify scattered strands of Houston's public transportation network and facilitate connectivity to downtown for HSR riders, without adversely affecting existing neighborhoods. It would also serve Houston-area commuters and promote a reduction of cars on the road. Plus, with a modest number of stops, it becomes an express rail line attractive to both local commuters and high-speed rail riders traveling into downtown.

## **Background on the High-Speed Rail (HSR) Project**

In late October 2014, Houston communities learned studies were being conducted by a private company, Texas Central Railway (TCR), now Texas Central Partners (TCP), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), to investigate ways to build HSR that would connect Dallas and Houston. There were several routes considered, including routes that would take the rail into downtown Houston following the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP) rail lines. These routes, if followed into downtown Houston, would have been extremely damaging to many Houston neighborhoods.

From November 1, 2014 to January 9, 2015, a public comment period was held where hundreds of residents expressed opposition to HSR going into downtown Houston via their neighborhoods. A corridor analysis was then conducted by the FRA to determine the most viable route and Houston station. Through this analysis, TCP decided to build the rail line along the so-called Hempstead Utility Corridor (US 290) and locate a Houston station in the area of the I-10/610/290 exchange close to the Northwest Transit Center. This is still the current plan, but final approval by the FRA through their Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been released. Though TCP maintains construction will begin in 2017, the FRA Draft EIS has been pushed back and is currently expected to come out in December 2016 or early 2017. Because of this, it is estimated that the final EIS statement will not be published until mid-to-late 2017. Only after the final EIS statement is released can TCP begin construction.

## **HSR Needs Connectivity to Downtown Houston**

Although there is still a push from some groups and entities to extend HSR into downtown Houston, the FRA concluded that going downtown via the BNSF or UP routes through existing neighborhoods would not be economically or environmentally feasible. The FRA also concluded the I-10 corridor would be too difficult for HSR to travel into downtown due to the turn radius and design needed to make the proposed HSR route continuous, safe and timely.

Since Houston has multiple commercial centers rather than a single dominant central business district, a stop near the I-10/610/290 exchange and Northwest Transit Center makes sense. Such a stop would enable business riders, TCP's core ridership, to easily get to other key areas of our city like the Energy Corridor, Galleria area, and Uptown Park. However, given a significant number of riders may need to go downtown, connectivity to downtown becomes an issue. Recognizing this, neighborhood leaders have come together, attended transportation meetings to learn more about various proposals, taken input from government transportation agencies, and agreed on a plan that HHSRW members believe would benefit all Houstonians while preserving existing neighborhoods.

## **Taking HSR from NW Transit Center Area to Downtown Via METRORail (Light Rail)**

In recent years, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) has made an enormous investment in expanding light rail in the City of Houston. Several lines bringing people into and around the city are well established, and ridership on this mode of transportation is increasing. HHSRW believes that extending existing METRORail lines to the proposed HSR end terminus at I-10/610/290 would transport HSR riders downtown while serving the Houston community as a whole.

METRORail's Purple and Green lines currently terminate at the Theater District stop downtown. To reach an HSR station in the vicinity of the Northwest Transit Center, these lines could be

extended to I-10 using the existing HOV ramp located near the former downtown Post Office, travel north within existing right-of-way, and continue elevated above I-10's center lanes to HSR's end terminus. A few elevated stations along the way could serve local riders. This plan would connect a portion of the city that has yet to be linked to METRORail, provide additional local commuting options, and offer a much needed connection for HSR riders traveling to downtown Houston.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the Houston-to-Dallas HSR project, Houstonians must consider sensible ways to incorporate a new NW-Downtown connection into the City's existing transportation network. Mass transit options should be available to move people to where they want and need to go in ways that would help all Houstonians, while still preserving our communities and neighborhoods. Extending METRORail's Purple and Green lines down the I-10 corridor will accomplish this goal.

**VI. Announcements and Open Comments** (5 minutes)

**VII. Adjournment:** 8:00 p.m.