

# **Public Meeting Oral Comments**

My name is Alan Atkinson. I'm here as a private landowner and developer in this area. There's three projects I'd like to mention briefly. The first one is Project 300549. It's the Buffalo Bayou Heritage Corridor. And of any projects that you look at, this one should be funded. The reason for that is because of what's going on. This is the hike and bike trails from downtown going east to Lockwood. It was a federally funded project. The project failed. The private landowners got together with me and we built 2.5 miles of trails with private money from G Street near downtown at James Bute Park all the way east to Lockwood. We built 2.5 miles of trails, private dollars, private donations, private dollars. This project is a TxDot-sponsored project to complete the last connection. It connects it -- makes the final connection to connect the trail at G Street. It also jumps across the Bayou on an old railroad bridge that was burned out by a vandal years ago during the coldest day of the year. This project will also rebuild that historic railroad bridge and make it safe to go over. And it will also make the final connection of this trail to link downtown and the East End through Clayton Homes. Now, this project came up last year and for some reason it didn't get funded, which was shocking to everybody because the last land acquisition was accomplished last year by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership last summer bought the last right of way from Clayton Homes to provide that link between downtown and the East End. So this project will complete the work we've been doing for over 10 years, private money, and it's the (inaudible) to use the last public increment to make those final connections and that's why this trail should get built after 10 years of effort. The second project I want to mention is the one that Mr. Ezzell just talked about. I've worked in this -- within one block of this interchange for the last 19 years starting with the old Mercado del Sol. This -- if you've been to Ninfa's, this is the intersection you go through, Lady Guadalupe, on the way to Ninfa's. The reason this roundabout is important is, privately, over the years, we got rid of the convenience store where they sold the 40-ounce beer and the crack cocaine, we got rid of the blood bank that was on that corner, we got rid of the hubcap shop that was on that corner. So that corner has transformed from being a really seedy, nasty place to a place that private effort has done to really clean it up. Publicly, the East End Management District and the Parks Department have spent \$5.2 million next door to clean up Guadalupe Park. They spent \$3.1 million to build the Esplanade on Navigation. They spent \$1.2 million right there to build the sidewalk that (inaudible) on Canal Street. So we have about \$10.5, \$11 million of public money. This project is the core. It's the middle intersection that links all those other expenditures together and finishes the job. This neighborhood has transformed completely. And what Mr. Ezzell said is true. We've gotten rid of most of the heavy truck traffic that doesn't need to go through there anymore. This roundabout will allow bus traffic, but it will tend to push the heavy truck traffic to a different neighborhood. The last (inaudible), just very quickly, is Project 300435. This is the Park's Department 3 (inaudible) from Memorial to San Felipe. This is a great project. As a private developer, I don't develop in that area, I'm not building apartments in that area, but I know that project will and I know the impact it's going to have. One of the biggest problems with Memorial Park is linking it to the neighborhoods and this project will link Memorial Park to the south. If you go down between Westheimer and San Felipe and see the thousands of new apartment units that are being built right now, that's thousands of new residents that have no access to Memorial Park. And this project will give them a direct access off the road to get into the south side of Memorial Park and that's why this project is important.

**Alan Atkinson (public meeting, 8-11-15)**

## **Comments Received Via Email**

I am submitting comments to the Texas Department of Transportation's submission for the Buffalo Bayou Heritage Corridor project. This trail project provides a vital link in the Buffalo Bayou trail system from Shepherd Drive, just west of downtown Houston, to Lockwood Drive in the East End. It is one of only three "missing" segments in this 10-mile bayou stretch. The Heritage Corridor trail will provide continuous connectivity to the following Buffalo Bayou projects that are currently under development: . \$58 million Buffalo Bayou Park (Shepherd Drive to Sabine Street) which will be completed by October 2015 . \$4 million TIGER Trail (Smith Street to Milam Street) which will be completed by October 2015 . \$9.9 million planned downtown trail (San Jacinto/Fannin Street to McKee Street) (This trail is being funded with \$3.9 million in private funds secured by Buffalo Bayou Partnership and \$6 million from the Bayou Greenways Initiative program. (This trail is currently in design.) (Please note that the TIGER and downtown trails directly connect to the Main Street light rail line thus providing increased alternative transportation benefits.) Other Buffalo Bayou trail linkages currently exist east of the proposed Heritage Corridor trail all the way to Lockwood Drive In addition, the Heritage Corridor trail connects to the existing Heritage West trail that extends from McKee Street north along White Oak Bayou all the way to TC Jester. As the TxDOT submission states, the Heritage Corridor project also includes the rehabilitation of the TxDOT-owned Strauss Trunnion Bridge below US 59 that will be converted into a pedestrian/bicycle facility. This will provide important connectivity to already existing trails on the north and south of Buffalo Bayou. It is important to point out that the total cost for the Heritage Corridor project is \$4,042,587. TxDOT is requesting \$2,242,069 only for construction. In addition to the match of \$372, 252 provided by Buffalo Bayou Partnership for the trail construction, BBP is providing the trail easement which the organization purchased for \$128,000 from the Houston Housing Authority. Moreover, TxDOT is contributing \$1,240,000 for the Heritage Corridor's construction management, design (90 percent complete) and design review. The agency also is committed to paying for any project overruns. When one takes into account the funds being spent for Buffalo Bayou projects under development and TxDOT's financial commitment to the project, more than \$73 million is being leveraged with the \$2,242,069 being requested for TIP funding. Therefore, we strong disagree with this project receiving a 0 benefit/cost ratio score. As stated previously in these comments, Transportation Alternatives or Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funding, leveraged with committed funding from TxDOT and Buffalo Bayou Partnership, will allow the development of a critical missing link in the comprehensive Buffalo Bayou and Bayou Greenways Initiative trail systems. It also should be noted that this project is very close to being "shovel ready" (Design-90 percent complete, Engineering-90 percent complete, Right of Way Acquisition - 100 percent complete.) We respectfully urge Houston-Galveston Area representatives to reconsider the low ranking that this project has received.

**Anne Olson**

I really would like a safe, effective, and fun way to and from work

**Abdiel Guzman**

Before allocating scarce resources to more Houston bike stations, please consider using any "extra" resources to first improve the riding skills of bike riders... most run all stop signs, squeeze between cars and generally are reckless. Perhaps programs for education, licensing, patrolling, warnings, tickets, etc. are in order before expanding bike stations and other bike related items. Thank you for listening.

**Robert Lyle Williams**

## **Comments Received After the Public Comment Period Deadline**

## **Buffalo Bayou Heritage Corridor**

I am writing in support of the Buffalo Bayou Heritage Corridor to emphasize its important position as a connector between Buffalo Bayou Park, trails that are being constructed through downtown, and the East End. With this and only two other missing links, the trail along the south side of Buffalo Bayou will be continuous from Shepherd Drive to Lockwood Drive. This connection will provide recreational opportunities, transportation alternatives, and a true link between the two sides of town that are traditionally divided by office towers and congested traffic. Buffalo Bayou Partnership has raised 3.5 million dollars to get the trail through downtown, is working with the Houston Parks Board, the County, and Centerpoint Energy to realize the completion of this trail system. Please reconsider the current low ranking of this project and help the Buffalo Bayou Partnership continue to partner with public and private groups to make Buffalo Bayou a place that all Houstonians can access and enjoy.

**Sis Johnson**