

## **TAC Comments April 14, 2021**

### **Comment 1:**

#### **City of Houston Fondren Road Project**

Neighborhoods to Trails Southwest (NTTSW) strongly supports the modification of the scope of work of the City of Houston Fondren Road six-lane widening project (MPO ID 17093/CSJ 3510-04-049) to a reconstruction of the existing four lanes with intersection, safety, multimodal, and drainage improvements at the City's request under Agenda Item 12B.

The section of Fondren Road from South Braeswood Blvd. to West Airport Blvd. is in the heart of the area encompassed by NTTSW's plans for a network of mostly off-street trails that will connect residents in a wide variety of neighborhoods to schools, houses of worship, and businesses as well as to the Brays Bayou and Sims Bayou Trail networks. Over the last several years NTTSW has transformed from a trail installation advocacy organization to a more networked multimodal transportation organization. This occurred through a change from just local neighborhood individuals interested in promoting the construction of trails along bayous, drainage ditches, and utility rights-of-way to an organization now partnering with various persons/ departments/ districts/ precincts of the City and Harris County as well as METRO, several super neighborhoods, and other transportation-oriented advocacy groups to greatly improve all aspects of multimodal transportation in the area.

In light of our current mission, the six-lane proposal for the local sector of Fondren Road was especially egregious in removing a buffer between the sidewalks and the roadway, putting pedestrians and sidewalk cyclists more in harm's way as well as closer to traffic pollution. As seen elsewhere in Houston, increasing the number of lanes increases the average traffic speed, no matter what the posted speed limits are, and increases the injury severity of those traffic accidents that do occur, not at all an improvement for the area.

The proposed reduction in the size of the median would remove many trees that should help with pollution control as well as the aesthetic value that mature plantings bring to the area.

This process of reconstruction while keeping Fondren Road at four lanes allows for improvements in the design of the numerous intersections to better accommodate pedestrians. Some current intersections are problematic for elderly residents to safely cross. Often, they are stranded mid-crossing on narrow concrete median sections with vehicles whizzing by at alarming speeds. The intersection of Fondren Rd. and West Bellfort Ave. has been documented as one of the ten most dangerous in Houston, yet it is in a retail and service business area that sees a lot of pedestrian and some very brave cyclist traffic. Redesigning this intersection to make it safer for all would be an admirable outcome of this project. The same goes for other major intersections along Fondren Rd.

Many sectors along Fondren have experienced flooding during heavy rainfalls. The water usually drains away within an hour after a typical heavy thunderstorm, but traffic is stopped for an unacceptable period. Drivers often do unwise and damaging things during these short-term floods, like driving on the medians (or even sidewalks!) to get through the flooded areas. Therefore, NTTSW strongly supports improved drainage as part of the Fondren Rd. reconstruction project.

Thank you for your time in reading these comments in support of keeping Fondren Rd. at four lanes while making numerous needed improvements.

Stephen Polnaszek  
President, Neighborhoods to Trails Southwest

**Comment 2:**

**Rockwell Management Corp.**  
10101 Fondren Road, Suite 460  
Houston, TX 77096

April 12, 2021

Via email: [publiccomments@h-gac.com](mailto:publiccomments@h-gac.com)  
Mr. Patrick Mandapaka  
MPO Assistant Director  
3555 Timmons Lane  
Houston, TX 77027

RE: SUBJECT: April 14, 2021 TAC Meeting  
MPO PROJECT ID: 17093 FONDREN RD (S BRAESWOOD BLVD TO W AIRPORT BLVD)  
RECONSTRUCT TO 4 LANE ROADWAY WITH INTERSECTION SAFETY, MULTIMODAL AND  
DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

Dear Mr. Mandapaka:

I am providing this letter of support for the above referenced project. As a property owner of two office buildings on Fondren Road (10101 and 10103) with approximately 200,000 square feet I support the 4 lane roadway improvements contemplated for Fondren Road. I have owned these buildings since 2007 and have hundreds of people working in the buildings. The buildings house the City of Houston Library, State of Texas Attorney General, GSA Veteran Affairs, State Representative Alma Allen, Brays Oaks Management District, and many other private and not-for-profit businesses.


Fondren Road is a major gateway in the Brays Oaks Community. Reconstructing Fondren Road in partnership with local businesses and community organizations has the potential of enhancing the quality of life of the tens of thousands who use the road daily. The community and property owners appreciate the Transportation Advisory Committees consideration and support.

I believe it is crucial that Fondren be designed as a 4-way street. Historical ADT does not justify widening based on the following historical volume:

Houston GIMS Average Daily Trips					
Houstontx.gov Description	2011 ADT	2013 ADT	2015 ADT	2019/20 ADT	Avg Annual Change
S BRAESWOOD TO WILLOWBEND	23,291	25,177	25,177	23,681	0.21%
WILLOWBEND TO W BELLFORT	22,259	24,737	24,132	21,256	-0.56%
W BELLFORT TO W AIRPORT	24,002	22,535	26,610	24,870	0.45%

In addition, new median cuts should be designed in a fashion that accommodates existing businesses. New medians and turning lanes could potentially have a significant negative impact on local businesses. It is important that the redesigned medians not simply redirect access into a proliferation of U-turn traffic Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Etan Mirwis  
President

### **Comment 3:**



April 12, 2021

Via email: publiccomments@h-gac.com  
Mr. Patrick Mandapaka  
MPO Assistant Director  
3555 Timmons Lane  
Houston, TX 77027

RE: SUBJECT: April 14, 2021 TAC Meeting  
MPO PROJECT ID: 17093 FONDREN RD (S BRAESWOOD BLVD TO W AIRPORT BLVD) RECONSTRUCT TO 4  
LANE ROADWAY WITH INTERSECTION SAFETY, MUL TIMODAL AND DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

Dear Mr. Mandapaka:

Fondren Road is a major gateway in the Brays Oaks Community. Reconstructing Fondren Road in partnership with local businesses and community organizations has the potential of enhancing the quality of life of the tens of thousands who use the road daily. The community and property owners appreciate the Transportation Advisory Committees consideration and support.

I believe it is crucial that Fondren be designed as a 4-way street. Historical ADT does not justify widening based on the following historical volume:

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W BELLFORT TO W AIRPOPT	24,002	22,535	26,610	24,870	0.45%

I am providing this letter of support for the above referenced project. As a property owner of three large apartment communities on Fondren Road (9801, 10555 and 12265) with approximately 800 apartments and over 1,600 residents and employers, I support the 4 lane roadway improvements contemplated for Fondren Road. We have owned these properties since the early 90's and have hundreds of people living in the apartments, in addition I have my corporate office located at 9801 Fondren.

New median cuts should be designed in a fashion that accommodates existing businesses. New medians and turning lanes could potentially have a significant negative impact on local businesses. It is important that the redesigned medians not simply redirect access into a proliferation of U-turn traffic. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Starla Turnbo  
SMI Realty Management-Partner

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## Comment 4:



April 13, 2021

Via email: [publiccomments@h-gac.com](mailto:publiccomments@h-gac.com)

Mr. Patrick Mandapaka  
MPO Assistant Director

Re: April 14, 2021 TAC Meeting – Item #12B  
MPO Project ID: 17093 Fondren Rd. (S. Braeswood Blvd. to W. Airport Blvd.) –  
Reconstruct to 4 Lane with Intersection Safety, Multimodal and Drainage  
Improvements

The Brays Oaks Management District (BOMD) is writing in support of the above referenced project. The BOMD has been involved in the Fondren Rd. project since it was first envisioned by the City of Houston in 2012. Fondren Rd. is one of the principal north-south corridors that runs through the heart of the BOMD, and a key subject of many thousands of dollars of annual services including trash pick-up, esplanade, flower bed, tree and irrigation maintenance.

In 2013 many representatives of the BOMD including property and business owners and impacted constituent organizations attended a community presentation regarding the project at Fondren Middle School and raised concerns over the project as designed. No changes were made to the design, and there were no more community meetings. Suddenly the project resurfaced in 2019 and the design had not changed. As the project design documents were advanced to almost finalized in 2020, the BOMD and many of the constituent organizations that would be impacted by the proposed changes again expressed their concerns, the greatest of which was the rationale for expanding Fondren to a six-lane configuration in lieu of maintaining and simply reconstructing a four-lane configuration with improved intersection safety, drainage improvements and multimodal accommodation improvements.

As result of concerns expressed by the Brays Oaks Community, the BOMD Board of Directors approved the attached 'Resolution in Opposition to the Expansion of Fondren Road to Six Lanes' this past October. To date, the BOMD is not aware of any public or community support to widen Fondren Rd. to six lanes and the destruction of the esplanades with their many mature trees.

The BOMD is fully supportive of the new Revision being heard today and look forward to working with H-GAC and the City of Houston Public Works Department to see Fondren Rd. become an improvement showcase and one of the safest and best utilized corridors in the City of Houston for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Executive Director, Ben Brewer at (210) 889-5815 or [bbrewer@braysoaksmd.org](mailto:bbrewer@braysoaksmd.org).

**Brays Oaks  
Management District**

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Houston, Texas 77227-2167  
10103 Fondren, Suite 300  
Houston, Texas 77096  
Tel: 713.595.1200  
[www.braysoaksMD.org](http://www.braysoaksMD.org)

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph Rieger".

Ralph R. Rieger – Chairman Brays Oaks Management District

C: Brays Oaks Management District Board of Directors  
Attachment

**Comment 5:**

**Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36**

10611 Fondren Road

Houston, Texas 77096

(832) 729-0212

braysoakssnc36@gmail.net

April 12, 2021

*Via Email*

[publiccomments@h-gac.com](mailto:publiccomments@h-gac.com)

RE: Comments in Support of April 14, 2021 Agenda Item 12B to Modify the Scope of Work of the City of Houston Fondren Road Project (MPO ID 17093/CSJ 3520-04-049)

Dear Members of the Transportation Advisory Committee:

My name is Sylvia Rivas, and I am President of the Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36 (hereinafter referred to as the “Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood”). The Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood supports the future amendment to “Modify the scope of work of the City of Houston Fondren Road six-lane widening project (MPO ID 17093/CSJ 3510-04-049) to a reconstruction of the existing four lanes with intersection, safety, multimodal, and drainage improvements at the City’s request.” The section of Fondren Road from South Braeswood to West Airport scheduled for reconstruction (hereinafter referred to as the “Fondren Road Reconstruction Project”) is located within the boundaries of the Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood.

The Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood believes that the adoption of the amendment will result in a WIN/WIN/WIN/WIN outcome for the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project. It is a “WIN” for the City of Houston because it will have the funding and input from residents and businesses to use the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to create a model template for the reconstruction of roads utilizing the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan. It is a “WIN” for the Houston-Galveston Area Council (hereinafter referred to as “H-GAC”) because the funding it will approve for the modified Fondren Road Reconstruction Project will help create a new Fondren Road that will save lives and improve the quality of life for the residents of our Community both now and for decades into the future. It is a “WIN” for the businesses on Fondren Road because the new, safer Fondren Road will help them keep their current customers and attract new customers to their businesses. Finally, it is a tremendous “WIN” for the residents in our Community whose lives and the lives of their families and friends will be saved by keeping Fondren Road at four lanes (and, in some locations, reducing Fondren Road back to four lanes) and who will also enjoy a better quality of life. The Fondren Road created by the modified Fondren Road Reconstruction Project may even attract new residents and new businesses to our Community.

The adoption of the amendment to reduce the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project from six lanes to four lanes will save lives. This isn’t a theoretical or unsubstantiated statement. A portion of

Fondren Road at the intersection of Fondren Road and West Belfort is already six lanes wide. With a letter dated May 20, 2019, Stephen J. Ratke, P.E., a Safety Engineer with the U. S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, submitted the City of Houston Pedestrian and Bicycle Road Safety Audit Part Two report to Jeffrey Weatherford, P.E., PTOE with the Houston Public Works Department. This report is entitled “Houston Safer Streets Initiative Top 12 Intersections Pedestrian/Bicycle Road Safety Audit Second Six Locations” (hereinafter referred to as “Road Safety Audit”). Mayor Sylvester Turner had asked organizations to help the City of Houston identify the “...ten highest priority intersections for improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety.” Road Safety Audit at page 3. The Road Safety Audit described how LINK Houston determined the 10 highest priority intersections out of the thousands of intersections in Houston.

“LINK Houston analyzed motor vehicle crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2017 to equitably identify priority intersections across Houston. The underlying crash data was from the Texas Department of Transportation Crash Records Information System. Crash injury severity and death were weighed based on U.S. Department of Transportation Value of Statistical Life guidance (e.g., the value of preventing a death is \$9.6 million) and then attributed to intersections. Intersections were ranked based on the cumulative impacts to pedestrian and bicyclists over the five-year period. Analysis of the ten highest priority intersections was presented to the City of Houston and Mayor Turner prioritized the seven bolded intersections:

#### **7. Fondren [Road] & West Belfort....”**

Road Safety Audit at page 3 (bold emphasis contained in the original document). The Fondren Road and West Belfort intersection is also on the High Injury Network map. Out of the thousands of intersections in Houston, the six-lane Fondren Road intersection at West Belfort is one of the most dangerous and deadly. The Road Safety Audit contained two “Medium to Long Term” recommendations for the Fondren Road intersection at West Belfort. The first recommendation is: “Reconfigure Bellfort and Fondren to widen median (See Figure 15), provide bicycle facilities, **and encourage slower speeds by reducing the cross section from six lanes to four.**” Road Safety Audit at page 20 (bold emphasis added). If the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to four lanes is approved, the reconfiguration contained in this recommendation, particularly decreasing the number of lanes to four lanes and widening the median to increase the safety for the pedestrians crossing Fondren Road, could be implemented. Imagine the lives saved from death or severe injury if Fondren Road at West Belfort falls out of the top ten intersections because of modifications to Fondren Road permitted by the amendment to the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project. Imagine the lives saved from death or severe injury by the amendment to the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project because Fondren Road between South Braeswood and West Airport is not expanded to six lanes.

The lives saved from death or injury on Fondren Road because of the passage of the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project will reach beyond Fondren Road remaining at four lanes. Houston has a plan for reducing traffic accident-related deaths. On December 16, 2020, Mayor Sylvester Turner launched the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan to eliminate traffic deaths in Houston by 2030. When introducing the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan, Mayor Turner said “...we have to make a hard left turn away from the mindset that Houston streets exist

solely for cars. We need to expand our outlook on mobility to recognize that streets belong to everyone who walks, bikes, drives, uses a wheelchair, and takes public transit.” A goal for the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan is: “We will end traffic deaths and serious injuries and create safe, equitable, accessible streets for people walking, rolling, and biking, driving, and connected to transit.” Houston Vision Zero Action Plan at page 19. The City of Houston, together with our Community, will be able to utilize the appropriate 13 Priority Actions to create a Fondren Road which will substantially diminish traffic fatalities and severe injuries. What the City of Houston accomplishes with Fondren Road could become the template for reconstructing other streets in Houston to accomplish the goal of the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan. We know that H-GAC is knowledgeable about and supports the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan because Chuck Wemple, Executive Director of the H-GAC, is on the Vision Zero Executive Committee and Stephen Gage, also with the H-GAC, serves on both the Vision Zero Task Force and the Vision Zero Data Subcommittee. In addition, Mr. Gage was instrumental in the Transportation Policy Council of the H-GAC approving Resolution 2020-36 on October 23, 2020. Resolution 2020-36 states: “Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Transportation Policy Council commits to support transportation projects and programs to eliminate traffic fatalities in the region by the year 2050.” H-GAC’s approval of the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project and providing the funding and time for the City of Houston, together with our Community, to utilize the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan in creating new plans for the reconstruction of Fondren Road will help eliminate traffic fatalities. One of the Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood’s officers knows families who lost children in their teens and early twenties, needlessly, in traffic accidents. One of them was her cousin. The families were changed forever, and the pain of that loss has never gone away, even decades later. Imagine the families who will be spared the loss of a child or a parent or another relative or a friend because the H-GAC approves the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project and the City of Houston uses the approved funds to create a modified Fondren Road which exemplifies the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan.

Safety is not the only reason for H-GAC to approve the modification of the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project. Currently, Fondren Road has numerous esplanades which both provide an aesthetic beauty to Fondren Road and serve an important function. Although each esplanade may appear to be of minimal size, the combined space of all of the esplanades is 10,000 square feet. There is a total of approximately 100 mature trees on these esplanades. The Brays Oaks Management District has adopted 21 of these esplanades and upgraded them with irrigation systems and landscaping with the goal of providing beauty and enhancing the Community. The 10,000 square feet of these esplanades also provide a substantial area which is not covered by concrete and which can absorb rainfall. Under the current plan to expand Fondren Road to six lanes, all of these esplanades will be torn apart. All of the mature trees will be destroyed. All of the landscaping will be ripped out of the ground. From what we can tell, nothing of the current esplanades will survive. According to the plans, the esplanades will either be reduced in size or eliminated altogether, and will be replaced with yet more concrete coverings. To make matters even worse, the small strips of grass space between the sidewalks and the streets also will be covered with concrete because the street will be widened to reach the edge of the new curb. These small strips of grass also absorb rain. Given the flooding problems already plaguing this Community, we do not need even more concrete covering on Fondren Road.

As mentioned above, the current Fondren Reconstruction Project will have sidewalks extending to the curb, thereby eliminating any protective green space between the sidewalk and the curb. This appears to enhance the risk for pedestrians, especially pedestrians who are disabled. Approving the reduction of the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to four lanes should enable the City of Houston to maintain the safe, undeveloped areas which are part of the current sidewalks and more in keeping with the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan.

To date, the Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood has not met anyone in the Community who supports expanding Fondren Road to six lanes. We do not see any benefit to expanding Fondren Road to six lanes, but we see many benefits to the reconstruction of Fondren Road at four lanes, particularly if the new plans for the reconstruction of Fondren Road include the participation of our Community and the utilization of the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan. We hope that that you will vote to approve the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to keep Fondren Road at four lanes.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sylvia Rivas*

Sylvia Rivas, President

Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36

<http://www.houstontx.gov/superneighborhoods/36.html>