

TPC Comments May 21, 2021

Via Email publiccomments@h-gac.com

Comment 1: Bay Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36

RE: Comments in Support of May 21, 2021 Agenda Item 7 – Resolution 2021-16 – 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 Policy Council:

The Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36 (hereinafter referred to as 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” because the modifications will enable the City of Houston to make Fondren Road from South Braeswood to West Airport safer for everyone who uses Fondren Road, including vehicle drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and the disabled. 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. Since the original approval of the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project, both the City of Houston, through the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan, and the Houston-Galveston Area Council, through Resolution 2020-36, have adopted programs with the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities. The amendment will enable the City of Houston to redesign the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project with the primary goal of reducing, and even eliminating, traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

The adoption of the amendment to reduce the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project from six lanes to four lanes will save lives. This is not a theoretical or unsubstantiated statement. A portion of Fondren Road at the intersection of Fondren Road and West Bellfort is already six lanes wide. Out of the thousands of intersections in Houston, the Fondren Road and West Bellfort intersection is currently one of the 10 most dangerous and deadly intersections in Houston. 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 intersection of Fondren Road and West Bellfort was listed as #7 on that list. See Road Safety Audit at page 3. The Fondren Road and West Bellfort intersection is also on the High Injury Network map. The Road Safety Audit contained two “Medium to Long Term” recommendations for the Fondren Road intersection at West Bellfort. 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 Bellfort 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 the four-lane sections of Fondren Road between South Braeswood and West Airport are not expanded to six lanes.

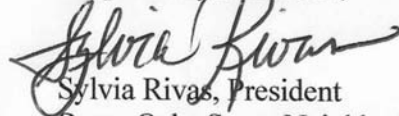
The lives saved from death or injury on Fondren Road because of the passage of the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project will reach beyond Fondren Road remaining at four lanes. A goal of the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan is to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries in Houston by 2030, nine years from now. “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. If the amendment is approved, the City of Houston will utilize the appropriate 13 Priority Actions in the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan to redesign the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to protect the lives (and increase the enjoyment) of everyone who uses Fondren Road, including vehicle drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and the disabled. Fondren Road could become a template for reconstructing other streets in Houston to accomplish the goal of the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan.

Houston is not the only entity to establish a goal of eliminating traffic fatalities. As you know, on October 23, 2020, this Council approved Resolution 2020-36 by a unanimous vote. 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.” Although the original Fondren Road Reconstruction Project was approved years before the adoption of Resolution 2020-36, there is nothing in Resolution 2020-36 which limits its application solely to prospective projects. The Transportation Policy Council’s approval of the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project will enable the City of Houston, together with our

Community, to utilize the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan to create new plans for the reconstruction of Fondren Road which 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 you approve the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project. There were several "whereas" statements which preceded Resolution 2020-36. One of them read: "Whereas, all traffic fatalities are preventative. The elimination of traffic fatalities is achievable and should be the primary focus of all transportation planning and implementation activities."

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. We ask you to vote to approve the amendment to modify the Fondren Road Reconstruction Project to keep Fondren Road at four lanes.

Respectfully submitted,



Sylvia Rivas, President

Brays Oaks Super Neighborhood Council #36

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

Comment 2: Brays Oaks Management District

MEMORANDUM

DATE : May 20, 2021
TO : H-GAC Transportation Policy Committee
FROM : Brays Oaks Management District
RE : CSJ No. 0912-72-38 Fondren Road Amendment

To whom it may concern:

The Brays Oaks Management District (BOMD) is in support of the proposed amendment to the above referenced project and encourages adoption and approval of the amendment as proposed and as recommended by the H-GAC Transportation Advisory Committee.

The BOMD supports the proposed modification to be consistent with the specific recommendations from the Federal Highway Administration Road Safety Audit that was dated May 20, 2019. The proposed modifications are also consistent with the recently approved safety goals of the project sponsor and regional transportation planning partners as outlined in the City of Houston Vision Zero, TxDOT Road to Zero, and the H-GAC Vision Zero policies approved by each entity in 2020.

The proposed recommendations supported by the BOMD include:

- A typical cross section of 4 lanes with an expanded physical median along Fondren between S. Braeswood and W. Airport as recommended by FHWA and the safety audit team that included TxDOT personnel.
- Bus queue jump/right turn-lanes at major signalized intersections to enhance transit service and increase overall person-carrying capacity of the corridor.
- Sidewalk and median designs that exceed TxDOT standards and are compliant with City of Houston design standards and best practices for urban roadways.
- Specific intersection and transit signal priority modifications

The proposed recommendations reflect current data, and multimodal safety standards to improve multimodal roadway capacity and operations for all users while managing congestion.

Again, the BOMD supports the proposed amendment to this important project that serves as the key north-south artery through the District.

Respectively submitted,
The Brays Oaks Management District Board of Directors

Comment 3: Rockwell Management Corp.

Rockwell Management Corp.

10101 Fondren Road, Suite 460
Houston, TX 77096

May 20, 2021

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

RE: SUBJECT: May 21, 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.

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 4: Neighborhoods to Trails Southwest

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