



### Announcement Statement

We are here today to make two important announcements. First, we are announcing a broad-based organization to educate the community on the problems and short comings with the METRO Solutions Plan.

Second, and even more importantly, we are urging voters to help implement a financially sound, comprehensive, cost effective solution to Houston's congestion problems.

Make no mistake – it is absolutely critical that we address our area's congestion problems. The lack of real transportation solutions will strangle our economic vitality while drastically lowering our quality of life. To save our city, and to fulfill our potential, we must develop and implement a comprehensive solution to traffic congestion in Houston.

This coalition is formed around a single guiding principle: we favor any and all transportation solutions that result in real, cost effective congestion relief, and we oppose those that are not cost effective and do not produce congestion relief.

Texans For True Mobility wants to make this perfectly clear -- we would consider all possible solutions including light rail, commuter rail, roads, buses, express streets with grade separation, freight, pedestrian, TeleCommuting, bicycles, intelligent technology, roadway development and beautification, and a host of innovative transportation solutions. To repeat – we do not oppose rail per se. We oppose this METRO proposed program primarily for the following two reasons.

**Reason #1: It costs too much.** First, METRO's ballot asks for approval of a plan that ultimately uses over \$8 billion to build 73 miles of rail with \$2.6 billion of that spent on the first 22 mile extension. For all this money, it will have virtually no impact on relieving traffic congestion moving less than 1% of the traffic in METRO's service area in 2025. According to the Houston Galveston Area Council, METRO is currently scheduled to consume 48% of area transportation dollars through the year 2022 while moving about 2% of our traffic. Under METRO's own light rail proposal, this imbalance would only get worse. Why spend this enormous amount of money on a plan that will not help us relieve congestion?

**Reason #2: It does too little.** There will be virtually no congestion relief under the METRO plan and, an analysis of METRO's budgets show that they have vastly overestimated their sales tax and federal grant revenues and they have engaged in other dubious financial shenanigans. The core of the consensus plan was to protect the \$.25 of Metro sales taxes going to General Mobility Projects. The reality is that Metro is very likely to experience massive cash flow problems long before their plan is complete, and the \$.25 is simply not protected. No public entity with such severe financial problems and no visible way of paying normal operating expenses, let alone debt service on a new loan, should ask voters to approve a massive, \$640 million bond program. It is inconceivable and absolutely unacceptable that they misinform the public by using inaccurate and grossly exaggerated financial projections.

There are numerous other major flaws in the METRO referendum plan. It is designed almost exclusively for serving downtown, even though only 7% of jobs in Houston are in downtown. METRO says we need it to keep up with growth, but the majority of the growth will not be where the rail is being built. Since the vast majority of rail riders will come from buses, the METRO plan will make almost no impact on traffic and congestion, and in fact will likely add to congestion because it stops traffic and removes many lanes of roadway from our current system because most of the light rail is being built in the existing roadway. It will do little to reduce pollution, since it does not reduce the number of cars stuck in traffic. It claims to strongly support new bus service, but it spends only 3.3% of the new funds on buses thru 2010, and absolutely no new funds from METRO Solutions goes to buses for the next three years.

Dallas already tried this experiment, and it has not worked. Dallas has 44 miles of light rail, but their mass transit system is actually losing ridership and cutting routes. Also, they are facing a \$37M shortfall and have had to ask for federal assistance. Only 1.9% are riding the entire DART transit system in their region, including the 44 miles of rail and the buses put together.

We intend to run a vigorous campaign to defeat this proposal. After the campaign, we intend to remain active, to promote a real solution to congestion. We are not nay-sayers. We are truly concerned about the problem, and don't want to see an \$8 billion mistake made in our city without relieving congestion. Our strategy is straightforward – to tell the truth about the high costs and lack of benefits of the METRO plan – a first phase that costs over \$2.6 billion and an overall expenditure on rail of over \$8 billion that will move less than 1% of the traffic in METRO's service area in the year 2025. This minimal ridership will have no virtually no impact on congestion. Why would anyone support such a clearly wasteful, inefficient plan?

Instead of the expensive, ineffective METRO plan, we urge the community to work with the concept that the Houston Galveston Area Council is moving forward with and support a comprehensive plan that we hope when finalized will effectively use our resources to lower our area congestion.

In closing, we oppose METRO's plan because it costs far too much, and it does nothing to reduce congestion.