August 1, 2012

To: Mr. Gilbert Garcia and fellow board members  
Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO)

Cc: Mr. George Greanias, President and CEO  
Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO)  
Honorable Annise Parker, Mayor, City of Houston  
Honorable Ed Emmett, Judge, Harris County

Dear Chairman Garcia and METRO board members,

Last week, Metro board members put forward six different proposals for possible ballot concepts for a November 6 referendum on the future of transit in the Houston region.

Houston Tomorrow is committed to improving the quality of life of all the people of the Houston region. Our vision is that in 2036, on Houston’s 200th birthday, the region will be home to the healthiest, happiest, most prosperous people in the nation.

We recognize that the people of Houston prioritize investing in transit and that they support dedicating as much of the transit tax to transit as possible. A strong transportation network that supports a vibrant and growing economy must provide safe, affordable, and reliable choices for all travelers, as well as provide opportunities for businesses to settle in the area.

We have reviewed the proposals with respect to how they meet the following objectives:

- Enable real progress on transit expansion in the next 5 years
- Keep the promise of the 2003 transit referendum
- Support economic growth by expanding access to the region’s job centers
- Support a rising tax base by facilitating the market for mixed income housing in transit oriented neighborhoods along the growing light rail system
- Enable road supporters to support the ballot choice
- Ensure the sales taxes are fairly distributed to service area entities

While we know that Houston voters want to approve a straight up-or-down vote to commit all of the transit taxes to transit, we recognize the value of a compromise measure that will satisfy more parties. Given that reality, the ballot concept put forward by board member Christof Spieler best satisfies our goals and will provide the most benefit to the people of the Houston region.

In particular, enabling near-term construction of the University light rail line is essential. This line is the vital backbone of Houston’s light rail network, connects three of the region’s largest job centers, and allows for connecting a fourth major center on the Uptown line. Adding that service will give Houston the best modern light rail system in the nation with ridership much higher than that of the far more expensive Dallas system. Linking Greenway Plaza to Downtown and the Texas Medical Center, and eventually to Uptown/Galleria, will put nearly half a million jobs within a ½-mile walk of high-quality transit service.

This Friday you will vote to select a concept to put to the voters. We respectfully urge you to join us in supporting Mr. Spieler’s proposal, which will help ensure the future economic prosperity of Houston.

Sincerely,

David Crossley
President

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