

## **Appendix D: Other Media**

## Articles

INDUSTRY NEWS > TRAVEL

# 15 Houston road projects needed to improve state's economy

Apr 17, 2015, 2:58pm CDT

**Olivia Pulsinelli**

*Houston Business Journal*

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Houstonians are undoubtedly well aware of the traffic congestion and road conditions that make driving around the city a pain.

But the state's roadways also play a critical role in the Texas economy, according to Trip, a Washington-based transportation research group.

In a new report, Trip identified the highway projects that are most needed to support the state's economic growth. They include projects to build, modernize and expand highways or bridges, as well as improvements and capacity expansion to the state's rail and public transit system.



EGDIGITAL

In a new report, Trip identified the highway projects that are most needed to support the... more

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The Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth areas both have 15 projects on the list, while Austin and San Antonio have 10 each. There are 20 other projects throughout Texas.

Houston's projects are listed below, ranked in order of most-needed as determined by Trip. Information is subject to revision as part of an ongoing review process, Trip notes.

## HOME OF THE DAY



### Home in Prestigious Pirates Beach

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1. Reconstruct and expand I-45 from U.S. 59 to Beltway 8 North

Cost: \$6.7 billion

2. Reconstruct and widen I-69 Southwest from I-610 to Beltway 8

Cost: \$1.25 billion

3. Construct four express lanes on I-610 from U.S. 59 to I-10 West

Cost: \$250 million

4. Reconstruct and widen I-10 East from I-610 to SP 330

Cost: \$523 million

5. Construct four toll lanes on State Highway 99 (Grand Parkway) from U.S. 59 North to State Highway 146

Cost: \$1.3 billion

6. Reconstruct and expand SH 288 from U.S. 59 to the Grand Parkway

Cost: \$1.3 billion

7. Reconstruct and expand I-45 from NASA 1 to 61st Street

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8. Reconstruct and expand I-10 from SH 6 to FM 359

Cost: \$360 million

9. Reconstruct I-10 to add additional lanes from FM 359 to the Brazos River

Cost: \$150 million

10. Add a dedicated bus lane on I-610 from Post Oak Boulevard to I-10W

Cost: \$55 million

11. Reconstruct I-610 connectors and mainline bridge at US 59

Cost: \$160 million



12. Construct four toll lanes and frontage roads on SH 99 from SH 288 to I-45S

Cost: \$580 million

13. Construct four toll lanes with frontage roads on SH 99 from US 59S to SH 288

Cost: \$626 million

14. Construct toll lanes and frontage roads on SH 249 from Brown Road to FM 1774

Cost: \$515 million

15. Reconstruct and expand US 290 from SH 99 to FM 2920

Cost: \$133 million

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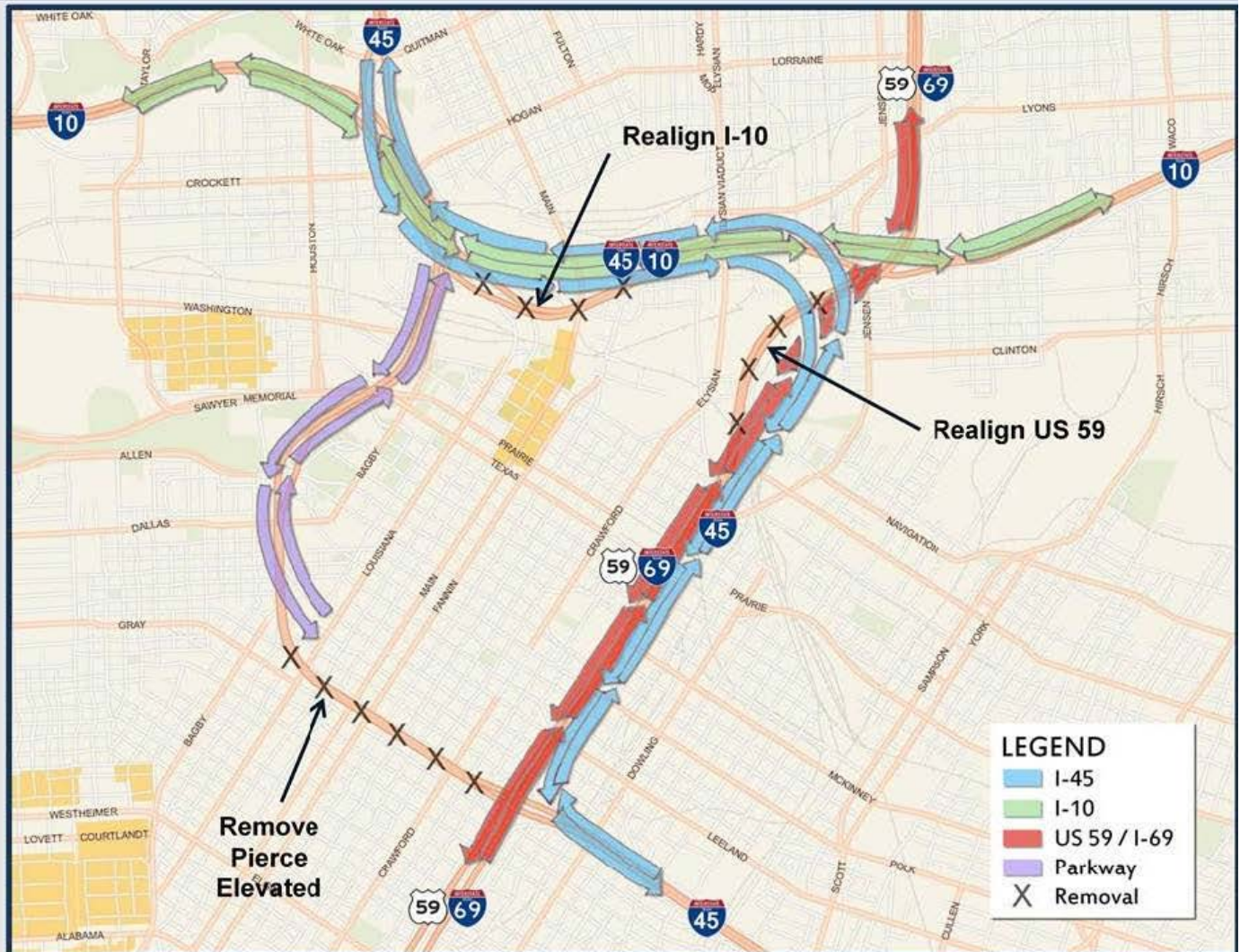
## TRANSPORTATION

# TXDOT Releases Plans On Major Redesign Of I-45 In Downtown Houston

Plans include tearing down the Pierce Elevated and realigning the freeway near downtown Houston. The public is invited to comment on the plans at a series of meeting starting on Thursday.

By: Gail Delaughter, April 22nd, 2015 06:09 PM

## PROPOSED RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE: SEGMENT 3



[www.IH45northandmore.com](http://www.IH45northandmore.com)

Above is a diagram of TXDOT's proposal to reroute freeways through downtown Houston.

A series of public meetings begins Thursday night on plans to redesign I-45 between Beltway 8 North and downtown Houston. The biggest changes are planned for downtown Houston, where TxDOT is considering tearing down the Pierce Elevated and realigning the freeway.

Plans unveiled online - and which can be read below - divide the project into three segments. There would be managed lanes between the Beltway and I-10, along with new frontage road lanes and a bike trail.

Initial designs were rolled out at public meetings in November 2013. TxDOT's Danny Perez said the goal is to increase capacity on the North Freeway without tearing through surrounding neighborhoods.

At that meeting, we spoke to several northside residents. Some said the improvements were long overdue. Others were disappointed TxDOT rejected earlier plans to route some of the North Freeway through underground tunnels.


The project is still a few years away. TxDOT says it plans to present the results of an environmental study in early 2016.


A new round of public meetings begin Thursday night at Aldine 9th Grade School in north Houston. It's from 5:30-7:30 PM. [Click here](#) to learn more about the project and to see a full schedule of public meetings.

### **TXDOT REPORT: NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.



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## TxDOT to host public meeting on revamping North Freeway

Published On: Apr 22 2015 11:39:25 PM CDT | Updated On: Apr 22 2015 11:42:29 PM CDT

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HOUSTON - The Texas Department of Transportation will host the first of a series of public meetings presenting new ideas to revamp the North Freeway Thursday night.

The plan could be the largest freeway rebuilding project ever in the area. The proposed project includes adding four managed lanes to Interstate 45 from Beltway 8 north to Interstate 10. It also includes realigning Interstate 45, Interstate 10 and U.S. 59 downtown and improving connections to Highway 288 and U.S. 59 south of downtown.

Thursday's meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. at the Aldine Ninth Grade School.


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Jason Merritt/Getty Images

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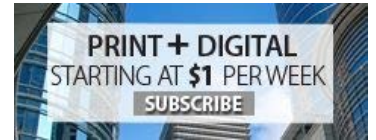
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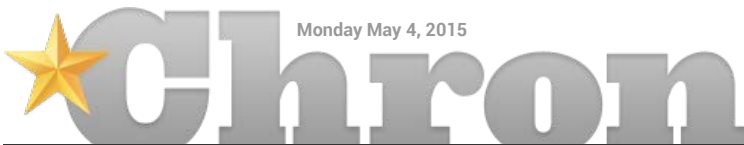
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## I-45 would move, sink and shift from Pierce Elevated in TxDOT plan

By Dug Begley | April 22, 2015 | Updated: April 23, 2015 8:31am

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Photo By Cody Duty/Houston Chronicle

1 of 23

Traffic travels along the Pierce Elevated, Monday, April 20, 2015, in Houston.



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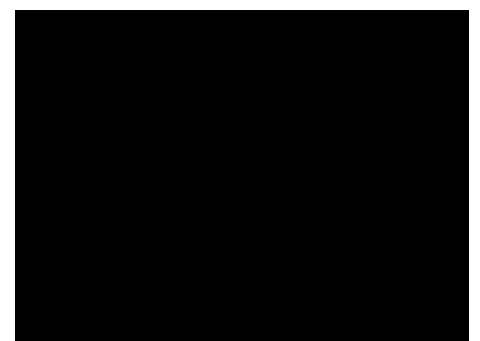


A massive plan to add managed lanes along Interstate 45 and potentially to reconfigure downtown freeway access will debut publicly Thursday, years after state officials started discussions of what could be the largest freeway rebuilding project ever undertaken in the Houston area.

In documents posted Tuesday, planners outlined broadly the proposal to add two managed lanes to I-45 from the Sam Houston Tollway in northern Houston to U.S. 59 south of the city's central business district. A public meeting to detail the proposal is scheduled Thursday.

Though the project stretches for roughly 16 miles, it's

### Latest Videos



the southernmost four miles that have received the most attention. In the plans posted, TxDOT proposes to depress the freeway – much like U.S. 59 west of Spur 527 – between Cavalcade and Quitman streets.



#### Commuting costs from Houston's suburbs

*The results are almost enough to make a Texan give up that gas-guzzling pickup truck (almost).*

Residents who have **tracked the project for years** are anxious to see what TxDOT has settled on as a preferred design. **Read more about how nearby residents see the project on HoustonChronicle.com.**

"I am really looking with dreaded anticipation for what they are going to propose," said Jim Weston, president of the I-45 coalition. "There's a lot of engineering and lots of questions about the design that really, I feel, TxDOT hasn't answered. So I really want to see what the plan is. I am hoping it is something that respects the community."

In downtown, sweeping changes are planned, including realigning the freeway to run parallel to U.S. 59. Moving the freeway would mean eliminating the Pierce Elevated, which carries I-45 across the central business district.

Downtown officials blame the Pierce for cutting off some areas of downtown, because the wide, elevated freeway acts as a barrier and his limited development around it.

"It is in some ways an awkward piece of urban structure that never has fit well," said Bob Eury, executive director of the Houston Downtown Management District.



#### Study shows how bad Houston's traffic is

*As Houston keeps growing and more jobs come to the area, the city's congested highways and roads will only worsen.*

The garbled connections that link downtown freeways have been the source of congestion that's spread in every direction from the center of Houston. Realigning I-45 also reworks some of those connections, officials said.

Broken into three segments – the Sam Houston Tollway to Loop 610, the Loop to Interstate 10 and I-10 to U.S. 59 – the portions of I-45 rank 11th, 9th and 16th on the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's most congested highways in Texas. Nearby segments of I-10, U.S. 59 and Texas 288 also rank within the top 30.

By settling on a preferred route, TxDOT can do more specific analysis and prepare a federally required environmental report. That's the first step in rebuilding the freeway.



#### Are Houston roads fixable?

*Almost half of Houston workers spend more than an hour commuting each day and these suggestions may help.*

Officials have said the construction would likely occur in stages, starting downtown, but only after officials identify sources for the billions of dollars the project will cost.

In the northernmost areas – mostly bordered by commercial properties – it is a simple but massive widening project. Officials plan to add a frontage road lane in each direction, but to keep the freeway in its normal configuration, taking additional right of way on the west side of the freeway from the tollway to Airline Drive, then shifting to add property east of the freeway from Airline to Loop 610.

Within Loop 610, the freeway would be widened and remain above most local streets, south to Cavalcade. Between 10 feet and 80 feet of additional right of way will be acquired to add the managed lanes, shoulders and bike and pedestrian amenities along the frontage roads.

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## General News

# \$6 billion highway plan has Houston's I-45 congestion in cross hairs



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DAVID WARREN

The Associated Press

Published: 23 April 2015 05:38 PM

Updated: 23 April 2015 05:38 PM

Texas transportation officials have unveiled a bold plan to reconfigure a major interstate through downtown



Houston that would place lanes below ground level, alleviate congestion and give the city a dramatic face lift.

The Texas Department of Transportation estimates the cost to expand and realign Interstate 45 at more than \$6 billion, a price that would include changes to Interstates 10 and 69. A portion of I-45 near Minute Maid Park, where the Houston Astros play, would be “depressed,” allowing for the possibility that a large public park or some other green space could later be built on top of it.

The project must be vetted by several state and federal agencies before any work can begin, which could be at least five years away.

Houston motorists have long bemoaned interstates with too few lanes, pitches and curves that slow drivers and stymie traffic flow, and narrow configurations that can make drivers feel like canned sardines.

“Almost without fail there are accidents at all times of the morning,” said Paula Lenz, executive director of the North Houston Association. “It’s an ugly deal.”

Lenz, whose nonprofit association represents businesses and other groups north of downtown, said

the segment of I-45 through Houston is one of the most congested in the state and one of the worst for accidents.

“We’re always advocating ways to achieve improved mobility regionally, potentially through ways other than simply adding more lanes to roadways,” Lenz said.

I-45 is a primary north-south artery in Texas that links Dallas to Houston, and links Houston to the popular destination of Galveston. TxDOT figures from 2013 show the interstate in north Houston saw 272,000 vehicles a day. Meanwhile, the population of the Houston-Galveston region is expected to increase by an estimated 3 million people from 2000 to 2035, according to the agency.

The agency’s plan for I-45 is broken into three segments, with the first one calling for new frontage roads north of downtown Houston, along with managed lanes, otherwise known as toll lanes.

The second segment, along a portion of interstate close to downtown, also would add lanes and would include bikeways and walkways along frontage roads. A stretch of primary travel lanes and managed lanes would run

below street level, giving planners the opportunity to add green space above, similar to what's been done with Klyde Warren Park in Dallas. Any greenway would be funded through some public-private collaboration separate from the Transportation Department plans, according to Bob Eury, executive director of the Houston Downtown Management District.

“Any improvements would have to make a material difference in how people flow through this area,” said Eury, explaining that most interstate traffic through central Houston is on its way elsewhere, with a relatively small percentage actually headed for downtown.

The third segment of the project would essentially move I-45 eastward where it shares a portion of I-10 before curving southward. Parts of I-10 and I-69 would be straightened and, most significantly, a portion of the Pierce Elevated, which constitutes a section of I-45, would be removed, allowing for neighborhoods to reconnect.

“Anyone would tell you that the Pierce Elevated has not been an urban amenity,” Eury said, adding that it’s “loomed as a barrier over the years.”

Jim Weston, president of a community group called the I-45 Coalition, said the scope of the project introduces a number of questions. For instance, people living along the corridor are concerned they may lose land as TxDOT expands rights of way to accommodate future work, Weston said.

State engineers over the months have dropped some aspects of the project while quickly introducing new components. “In some respects it just seems like they’re rushing it through,” he said.

“I don’t know if I’m for it or against it at this point,” Weston added.



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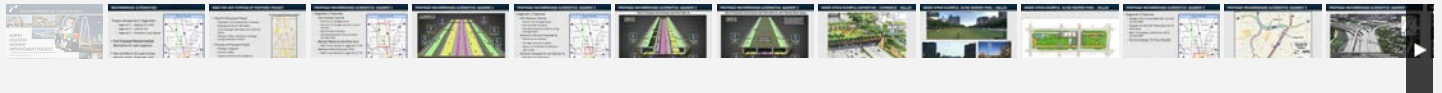
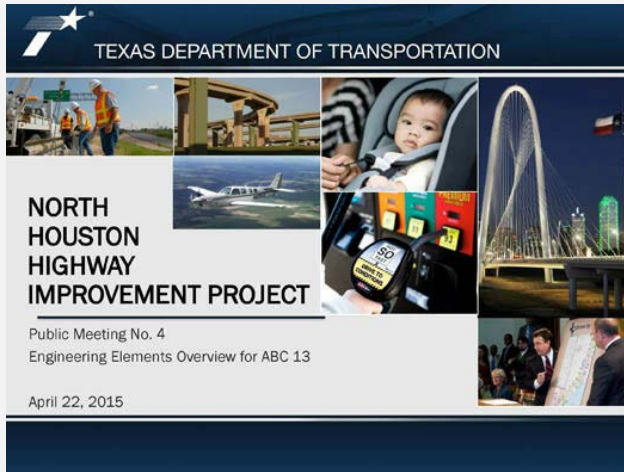
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## NEWS

## FINAL PROPOSAL WOULD CHANGE LOOK OF NORTH FREEWAY



Renderings of the North Freeway project



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By Rebecca Spera

Thursday, April 23, 2015

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- After years of having the public weigh in on the North Houston Highway Improvement Project, TxDOT released their final proposal Thursday to reconstruct I-45 the North Freeway between downtown and North Beltway 8.

"We're trying to go in and make sure we address congestion in the Houston area," says TxDOT Public Information Officer, Danny Perez.

The project will break down into three areas. Segment one will be between North Beltway 8 and I-610 the North Loop.

"It's going to remain four lanes -- four lanes on the NB side and four on the SB side," said Perez. "Then you'll have two managed lanes, and then you'll have the additional three frontage road lanes."

This highway plan will continue toward downtown.

The second section of work will be between I-10 and I-610 the North Loop. There, I-45 will transform into a whole new landscape.

"The frontage road will be above grade and you'll have the main lanes and managed lanes below grade," explains Perez.

In addition, if funding is available, creating a green space above the freeway near Quitman and North Main, and another green space near the GRB will create a whole new look for Houston. It's something Dallas did a few years back near their downtown.

Closer to downtown, there will be major changes. First, I-45 will run parallel to US-59.

"So, you'll have two freeways next to each other on the east side of downtown," adds Perez.

We'll also say goodbye to the Pierce Elevated.

"This definitely will improve congestion into the Downtown area," said Perez.

Perez explains downtown connectors will ease the bumper to bumper conditions.

"If you want to go to downtown, you'll have the parkway option," he said. "Get on the parkway and go to Downtown. But if you're on the north side trying to go south of downtown, you can bypass the downtown spur or downtown parkway."

Construction of the North Houston Highway Improvement Project won't have you tapping your brakes just yet.

"This could be five, ten years down the road. It depends on when funding becomes available," says Perez.

TxDOT wants to make sure the public knows the plan and the project's impact on the community. Three public meetings will take place.

The first is Thursday night at Aldine Ninth Grade School, 10650 North Freeway

The next will be April 28 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, at Houston Community College Central Campus, Learning Hub/Science Building. 1300 Holman St.

The last one will be April 30 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Jefferson Davis High School 1101 Quitman St.

For more info: <http://www.txdot.gov/>  
or <http://www.ih45northandmore.com>

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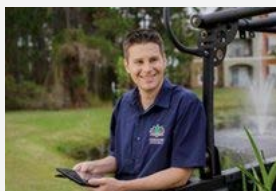
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FREEWAY FRENZY!

The 5 Wackiest Images from TxDOT's Plans To Reroute I-45 and Abandon the Pierce Elevated



THERE'S SO MUCH to say and gawk at in the latest “proposed recommended alternatives” for reshaping I-45 now being shopped around by TxDOT and a host of freeway-happy consultants — enough for a [fourth round of public meetings scheduled for tonight and next week](#), plus hours of extra-curricular speculation. The plans encompass dramatic changes to the North Freeway all the way from Beltway 8 to a new split adjacent to the Third Ward, including eye-opening widenings, all sorts of exciting tunnels and high-flying overpasses, a slew of spaghetti-like interchanges, and — the pièce de résistance — the wholesale give-up of I-45's current L-shaped wrap around Downtown, including the Pierce Elevated.

These 5 images from our highway overlords' exciting imagined future sum it up best:

1. THE X-ING-OUT OF THE PIERCE ELEVATED (diagrammed above). If the elevated portion of I-45 along the path of Pierce St. goes away, how will anyone be able to tell where Downtown ends and Midtown begins? Don't worry, a few proposals are being shopped around to turn a de-automobiled structure into a [High Line](#)—like public park or bikeway. (Though much bigger, 'cuz Houston.)

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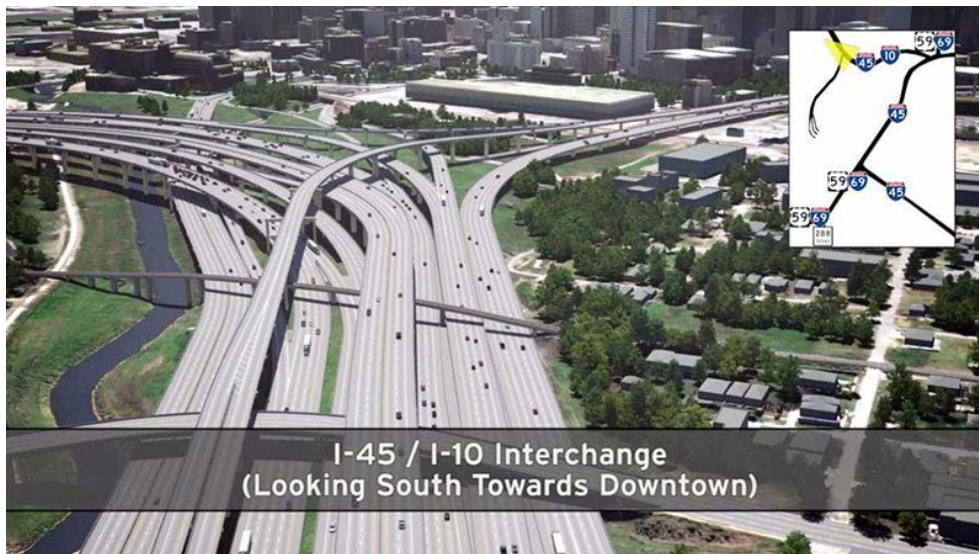
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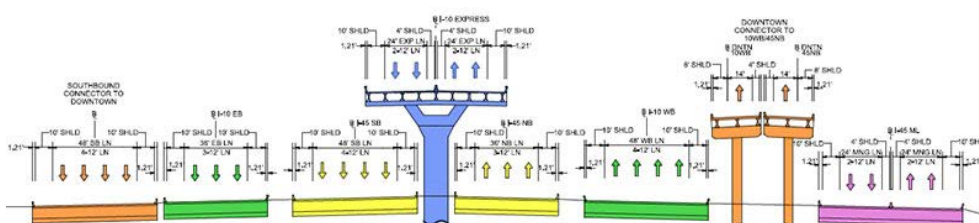
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2. **THE NEW I-10-MEETS-I-45 FREEWAY BUNDLE.** See, they'll just reroute I-45 north of Downtown, where it'll get all cozy with I-10, already in progress. Need help figuring out which patch of concrete is yours in the first image? Just refer to the handy color-coded guide above.



PROPOSED I-10  
TYPICAL SECTION

3. **28 LANES OF FREEWAY BLISS.** And here it is, just your basic 28-lane highway, along the stretch of I-10 north of Downtown. Not counting any feeder-road additions, of course.

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4. THE NEW 10-45-59-69 TANGLE. Whoah — that's some World Class concrete spaghetti in there. Just follow the turn-by-turn instructions carefully and you'll get where you want to go.

View of Proposed Improvements near North Main St.



View of Proposed Improvements near North Main St. with Potential Green Space



NOTE: Green space option is conceptual only and would require separate development and funding.

5. THE FREEWAY GREENWAY YOU CAN'T EASILY GET TO. Putting 12 lanes of the North Fwy. underground between Quitman and Cavalcade would free up a bunch of space for park-like greenery! Lining it with high-speed feeder roads on either side would help keep out undesirables.

[4th Public Meeting Documents](#) [North Houston Highway Improvement Project]

[TXDOT Releases Plans On Major Redesign Of I-45 In Downtown Houston](#) [Houston Public Media]

[Massive I-45 project would remove Pierce Elevated, add lanes](#) [Houston Chronicle]

Images: TxDOT

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[Downtown, Freeways, I-45, Midtown, Near Northside, Proposed Developments, TXDOT](#)

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## I-45 major overhaul plan unveiled

Author: Meagen Morrison, Associate Producer

Published On: Apr 24 2015 10:00:54 AM CDT



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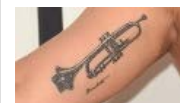
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I-45 major overhaul plan unveiled

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HOUSTON - TxDOT has revealed their plans to help relieve traffic on the North Freeway in what could be the largest freeway rebuilding project ever in Houston.

A public meeting was held Thursday where TxDOT unveiled the North Houston Highway Project. The project would add two managed lanes on both sides of Interstate 45 from the Beltway to the loop, and then from Interstate 610, to Interstate 10 the feeder lanes will be on the street level while the main lanes and manage lanes will be below street level.

This would provide an area for a green space on top. Then downtown and I-45 would run parallel to U.S. 59, eliminating the need for the Pierce Elevated.

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If the plans go through, construction would not start until 2016 and would begin in three phrases.

Karen Othon, a TxDOT public information officer said it is because "of the right away constraints when you come closer into town, we do have to change the look of the roadway."

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Another public meeting with be held April 28th from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at the Houston Community College Central Campus on Holman Street.

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So What are they going to do about the 45 610 interchange no matter how many lanes they provide you still have to shrink down to just (3) lanes as you go over 610. OK so instead of widening the freeway they're going to bury it!?? Don't they realize Houston Floods....A LOT. Why not build an elevated frwy. kinda like they have in Austin.

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## GRAY MATTERS

# Imagine the Pierce Elevated as a park

Instead of demolishing the freeway, why not put it to a great use?

By **Lisa Gray** | April 26, 2015 | Updated: April 27, 2015 9:52am

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9

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Photo: Marcus Martinez

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IMAGE 1 OF 15

Architect Marcus Martinez's concept drawing of "Pierce Skypark" at Prairie St.

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"Imagine something big," says John Cryer, an architect at Page Southerland Page. "Really big."

He's talking about the Pierce Elevated Freeway, the raised stretch of I-45 that hooks around the west side of downtown Houston. With an eye toward improving traffic flow, the Texas Department of Transportation **is proposing to re-route I-45** — and to do so in such a way that would leave the roughly two miles of the Pierce Elevated out of a job.

And that, say Cryer and other urban dreamers, could be a huge opportunity for Houston. What if, instead of tearing down the Pierce Elevated at an enormous cost, the freeway structure became the base for an elevated linear park — a Houston version of New York's High Line or Paris's Promenade Plantée?



**"Pierce Skypark,"** Cryer and two other Page architects call the idea. He, Tami Merrick and Marcus Martínez have been working on it pro bono, hoping that a powerful public or private entity would take the idea and run with it. Their presentations have been received warmly: Pierce SkyPark's Facebook page has more than a thousand "likes."

Martínez's dream-big conceptual sketches give a sense of the proposal's size and potential. The park that he and the rest of his team imagine would be 1.97 miles long, and cover 37.7 acres — an astonishing swath of parkland so near downtown. By comparison, New York's High Line, built atop an unused freight-rail line, is significantly shorter (only 1.45 miles) and much, much skinnier (13 acres).

Besides the obvious paths for bikes and pedestrians, Martínez says, there'd be room atop the Pierce Elevated to install all sorts of attractions. Maybe a golf range; or a bike-in theater; a conference center; gardens; or a greenhouse for native plants to be installed along Buffalo Bayou.

Oscar Slotboom, the author of the book [Houston Freeways](#), offers [a different vision and different drawings](#). He emphasizes that a park focused on recreation — chiefly walking, jogging and biking — could be created at a relatively low cost. And he also notes the historic value of saving the freeway structure. Freeways, he notes, have shaped the Houston we know.

But essentially, both Slotboom and the Page architects make the same argument: That the Pierce Elevated should not be demolished. That tearing it down would cost the Department of Transportation millions of dollars. And that leaving it would give Houston the opportunity to create something great.

The Texas Department of Transportation is currently holding meetings and accepting [online comments on its proposal to reroute I-45](#). (Downtown construction of the new freeway could start after 2017.) So the time for citizens to speak up is now, says Tami Merrick of the Skypark team.

"We wouldn't have to build it all at once," says Martínez. "We could build it in stages, as there's money, like they did with the High Line."

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO

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The Texas Department of Transportation is [accepting online comments](#) through May 14.

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## GRAY MATTERS

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**Imagine the Pierce Elevated as a park**



**A Houston statue of LBJ?**



**Am I too old to love a new band?**

"And as long as we don't demolish the Pierce Elevated, we're in business," says Cryer. "It wouldn't take much at all to make it ready for bikes and pedestrians."

"The park could be a huge asset," says Slotboom. "It would be a shame to waste it."



**Plantains in the supermarket. 'We're gonna stay.'**



**The building with the pharaoh's head**

Lisa Gray [REDACTED] runs Gray Matters.

**Bookmark Gray Matters.** By comparison, New York's High Line is significantly shorter and much, much skinnier.



**Lisa Gray**

Gray Matters  
Columnist, Houston

Chronicle

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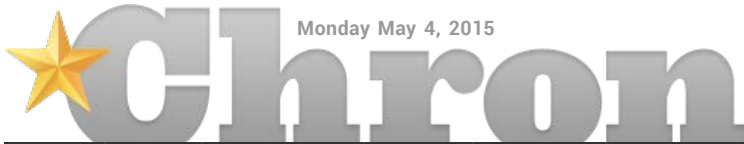


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## The Highwayman

Transportation in Houston with Dug Begley

### I-45 mega-project meetings move to Midtown Tuesday

Posted on April 28, 2015 | By Dug Begley



Traffic travels along the segment of Interstate 45 commonly called the Pierce Elevated, on April 20. (Cody Duty / Houston Chronicle)

It will be years before any construction takes place, but Tuesday evening the public will get a look at the **big (really big) plans for Interstate 45 at a meeting in Midtown.**

The **second of three meetings planned to solicit public comment** on the project starts at 5:30 p.m. at Houston Community College's Learning Hub/Science Building, 1300 Holman Street. The two-hour meeting will include a **presentation on the project** and some specifics of what Texas Department of Transportation officials are proposing.

The **project is potentially the biggest remake of a freeway ever in Houston**, starting with the addition of two managed lanes to I-45 from the Sam Houston Tollway in northern Houston to U.S. 59 south of the city's central business district. Officials have **worked on the proposal for about a decade.**

Plans also call for depressing the freeway in some areas, much like U.S. 59 west of Spur 527, and eliminating the Pierce Elevated through the central business district by shifting I-45 to parallel U.S. 59 on the east side of the urban core.

The plans received positive responses from business and community leaders in the central business district and many residents and commuters who rely on I-45. Others were skeptical the plan would ever be built as designed, while many noted the pains of another major Houston freeway being under construction for an extended period of time.

At the Tuesday meeting, the plan for the Pierce is likely to get a lot of attention. The elevated portion has long been considered a detriment to nearby development, and some welcome the idea of tearing it down.

Others, however, have designs on reusing it, possibly for a park.

Categories: [Construction](#), [Interstate 45](#)



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## EDITORIALS

# Pierce-redux

The Pierce Elevated could be bigger and better than the elevated park in Manhattan.

Copyright 2015: Houston Chronicle | April 28, 2015 | Updated: April 29, 2015 12:01pm

1



Photo: Cody Duty, Staff

Traffic travels along the Pierce Elevated in Houston. (Cody Duty / Houston Chronicle)

The Texas Department of Transportation has a \$6 billion plan that would transform downtown Houston. The plan, which we are still studying, calls for the demolition of the



Pierce Elevated Freeway and the relocation of that raised span of Interstate 45 to run east of the central business district.

For some, the demolition and relocation of the Pierce Elevated is welcome. The freeway is viewed as a barrier to walking and biking between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Others, including Pierce Skypark, a group of volunteers from Page, an architectural and engineering firm, have proposed an alternative: Leave the Pierce Elevated in place and turn it into an elevated linear park as New York City did with the High Line and Paris did with the Promenade plantée.

In the next few months, as various organizations and agencies study the plans, and TxDOT receives public comments, the possibility of transforming all or part of the Pierce Elevated into a park deserves consideration.

If the Pierce Elevated is destroyed as per the current TxDOT plan, the freeway's massive columns would need to be excavated in a way that would not litter the bayou with debris. By transferring the Pierce Elevated to the city as a park, TexDOT could avoid the cost of demolition.

Oscar Erik Slotboom, author of the book, "Houston Freeways: A Historic and Visual Journey," proposes that the city create walking, running and bicycling paths, providing a 2.6 mile round-trip that could be extended farther by connecting to the bayou trails. Other ideas include dedicated

An advertisement for SteelMaster Quonset Huts. The top left features the SteelMaster logo. Below it, the text reads "SteelMaster Quonset Huts for Sale". To the right is a photo of a wooden deck with a red door leading into a quonset hut. Below the text, it says "SPECIAL OFFER" and "Learn More" in a red button. At the bottom, the phone number "855-781-7490" is displayed. To the right of the phone number is a photo of a blue truck parked in front of a large silver quonset hut.

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## OPINION

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### Free speech

areas for group exercise, plazas with benches for viewing the downtown skyline and direct access to adjacent restaurants, stores and apartments.

The High Line in New York City generated \$500 million in tax revenue from a \$150 million investment, according to John Cryer, a spokesman for Pierce Skypark. The group advocates for the obvious uses but also points out that activities such as a bike-in theatre, gardens, a golf range, concerts and amateur soccer would all be possible and could be added in stages. With its 37.7 acres, the Pierce Elevated is larger than the High Line. "Imagine something big," says Cryer. "Really big."

The public is invited to submit comments on the overall plan by May 14. "A comment now is worth more than a comment in the future," notes Bob Eury, executive director of Central Houston, referring to the fact that TxDOT's plans are not yet set in cement.

Houstonians know how to use our freeways for driving. The future will tell whether we can learn to use the Pierce Elevated to relax.



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## TxDOT plans massive changes to I-45

By Gilbert Hoffman X Apr 28, 2015

NORTH HOUSTON – TxDOT, the state highway department, held a public meeting last Thursday evening, April 23 to display their latest plans for rebuilding I-45 in the north and central sections of the city.

The informal meeting, display boards and maps, and video presentation were at the Aldine Ninth Grade School. Several hundred persons attended the two hour open house, and TxDOT officials and their consultants were on hand to answer questions and explain the plans.

This is the fourth of a series of meetings, required by the federal government, to assess the public's concerns and needs, and to present the Environmental Impact Statement.

Additional meetings will be held April 28th at HCC-Central Campus, and April 30 at Jeff Davis High School.

For planning purposes, TxDOT broke the highway into three segments. Segment 1 is from Beltway 8 to the North Loop. The plan for this portion is to add 170 to 225 feet of right of way, and widen the on-grade pavement. The final roadway would have 18 lanes. Right-of-way would be added on the west side of the existing road, except for a small portion on the east side below Airline Drive.

Segment 2 is from the North Loop, to I-10 near downtown. Only a small widening of the right-of-way is required, because most of this section would be two levels, with the main lanes below grade.

Segment 3 is the most ambitious. The plan is to re-route I-45 around the city center, on the north and east sides, and abandon existing elevated roadways on the west and south, i.e. the Pierce Elevated would be torn down and views opened up. Other portions of I-10 and US59 in these areas would be abandoned to straighten alignments and improve intersections. Also, US59 would be below grade from the 527 Spur, to its intersection with downtown.

Features of the new design include safety features such as full width shoulder lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian paths, TxDOT said.

TxDOT is asking for comments on these designs from the public. You can see more information, and make comments by accessing the website: [www.IH45northandmore.com](http://www.IH45northandmore.com), or emailing comments to [HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov](mailto:HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov).



Segment 3 is the I-45 Highway as it traverses the downtown Houston core. The scheme is to re-route it to the north and east sides of the downtown, and abandoned the elevated structure now existing on the west and south. The south section, known as the Pierce Elevated, would be torn down to open up the views. On the west side, ramps would exit to grade level streets. On the north a new route north of the present I-10 would replace it, and then continue parallel to US59/I-69 until it turns south on the existing I-45 Gulf Freeway roadway.

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## GRAY MATTERS

# What would it take to turn Pierce Elevated into Pierce Skypark?

High Line founder: 'You can't just put up a planter and... call it a day.'

By Lisa Gray | April 29, 2015 | Updated: April 29, 2015 12:50pm

11



Photo: Cody Duty, Staff

IMAGE 1 OF 16

The Pierce Elevated Freeway: Could it someday be a place you'd want to linger?

---

The Texas Department of Transportation's **proposal to re-route I-45** would make the Pierce Elevated Freeway unnecessary. So, urban dreamers are asking, what could Houston do with a two-mile-long stretch of freeway-in-the-sky?

As I reported a few days ago, two different sources — one a group of architects at Page Southerland Page, one Houston Freeways author Oscar Slotboom — have floated what's essentially the same idea: What if instead of razing the freeway structure, it became the base for an elevated linear park — **a Houston version of New York's High Line** or Paris's Promenade Plantée?

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At the moment, it's just an idea in search of backers. But it's a big, meaty idea, and fun to think about. As far as I can tell, **Pierce Skypark** (as the Page architects call it) would be the only freeway ever radically reused in a way that still preserves something of its freeway-ness.

I particularly like thinking about the views from that park. Houston's downtown has always looked best from the freeway, and the Pierce's elevation feels exhilarating in mathematically flat Houston. What would it be like to savor those views slowly, without fear of collision?





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Pierce Skypark: Marcus Martinez's concept drawing of a park built atop what's now the Pierce Elevated.

---

But it's not just the top of the freeway that would be transformed; there's also the space underneath, currently a noisy, barren no-man's-land occupied only by the homeless. Without the freeway rumbling above, that shaded area could become a pedestrian- and bike-friendly landscape of apartments, shops, offices, restaurants and other attractions — a pleasant urban place to live or while away an afternoon.

I like that dream. But could it actually happen? And if it could, what would it take? How might it feel? I called people who'd have something interesting to say.

IN 1999, after Robert Hammond and Joshua David founded Friends of the High Line, a detractor derided their group as "just two guys and a logo." Which was pretty much true.



Photo: Oscar Slotboom / Pierceelevatedpark.com

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Oscar Slotboom imagines the Pierce Elevated as a park that appeals chiefly to runners, walkers and bicyclists.

---

Neither Hammond or David had any real tie to urban planning, architecture or parks: Hammond was a marketer at an Internet startup, and David was a freelance magazine writer. But alarmed by New York City's plans to demolish the elevated freight line, they printed business cards, showed up at meetings and gathered a constituency online. They endured court battles; they outlasted the mayor who opposed them.

And when the High Line opened, it astounded even them. They'd predicted that their park could attract 400,000 people a year. Last year 6.2 million people visited. Similarly, they'd predicted that the park would increase the value of nearby property in west Manhattan, boosting the city's tax revenue by \$250 million over 20 years. Recently, New York City estimated that impact to be closer to \$900 million. A project that cost \$260 million to build (including both public and private money) is said to have spurred \$2 billion in nearby development.



I sent Hammond, now executive director of Friends of the High Line, a link to the article I'd written about the Pierce Skypark proposal, along with its drawings. And by phone, I asked, What advice would you give Houston or other cities hoping to repurpose an urban ruin?

"You can't just put up a planter and a stairwell and call it a day," he said.

"Saying 'elevated park' is no guarantee of success. You have to think through the design and programming, the whole environment — a whole different way of seeing and experiencing the city. You have to figure out: What will people do up there? How will they experience Houston in a different way? And what goes underneath? Does it capture value? What economic sense does it make? I know that's important in Houston.

"It's a freeway! An expressway! All that's good and bad about Houston! The goal shouldn't be to ignore that. The goal should be to celebrate it. It's what people love and hate about Houston. Embracing the freeway: That's the real trick."

If Hammond were pushing the proposal, he says, he wouldn't show detailed concept drawings at this early point; they're too limiting, too likely to stunt people's imaginations. Instead, he'd talk about the views. And he'd show a map, or maybe just the overhead view with its lovely ribbon of green running along the edge of downtown. "How often do you get two miles of downtown Houston to envision?" he asked.

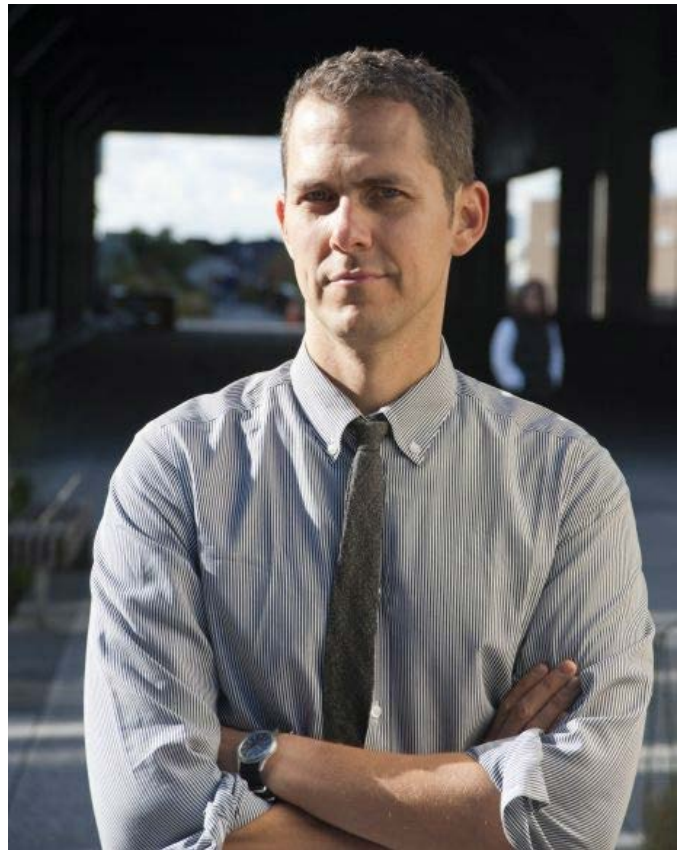


Photo: Annie Schlechter, Annie Schlechter/courtesy

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San Antonio native Robert Hammond is co-developer of the High Line park in New York.

---

Put forth a big idea, execute it well, and people will gravitate toward it, he says. "We built a wide base of support here," he said. "It can happen over time."



Photo: Betty Luman / Houston Chronicle

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The High Line: In 2014, it attracted 6.2 million people, making it New York's third-largest tourist attraction.

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RACHAEL DELUE, a Princeton associate professor of art who's written about the history of American landscapes, was intrigued by the SkyPark concept. As far as she knows, there's no other project like it: no other freeway that's been radically reused in a way that allows people to see its history.

"The wonderful thing about repurposing a freeway is that it could still look something like a freeway," DeLue said. That hasn't been the case in cities like San Francisco and Boston, where unused stretches of freeway have simply been erased.

But the Pierce SkyPark, LaRue said, "could retain a trace of its history. Part of the problem with cities is that things get demolished with no trace left. That deprives the city of depth and memory. Allowing the freeway to look like a freeway would be a great way



to retain a sense of place, of Houston's past, present and future."

She enjoyed the contrast between that past and that future: "The freeway would change from a place of movement to a place of repose, from a place for cars to a place for people. Instead of a place where people are isolated in their cars, you'd have a place where people mingle and converse."

"The idea seems so utopian and lovely," she said.

"Utopian?" I thought. "Lovely?" I'm not used to hearing those words applied to my city.

BUT ENOUGH with utopia. What would it take to for the Pierce Skypark to go from a vague concept to reality? I called Guy Hagstette, who knows the inner workings of longshot, much-doubted urban projects: He oversaw the launch of Discovery Green — a park that was once as hard for Houstonians to envision as a Skypark is now.

For Discovery Green, the confounding thing was its location: A plot of land front of the George R. Brown Convention Center on the moribund east side of downtown. When the city of Houston acquired the land in 2002, the idea of a park in that location was hard to swallow. People asked: Who'd go there except the homeless? And should the park really

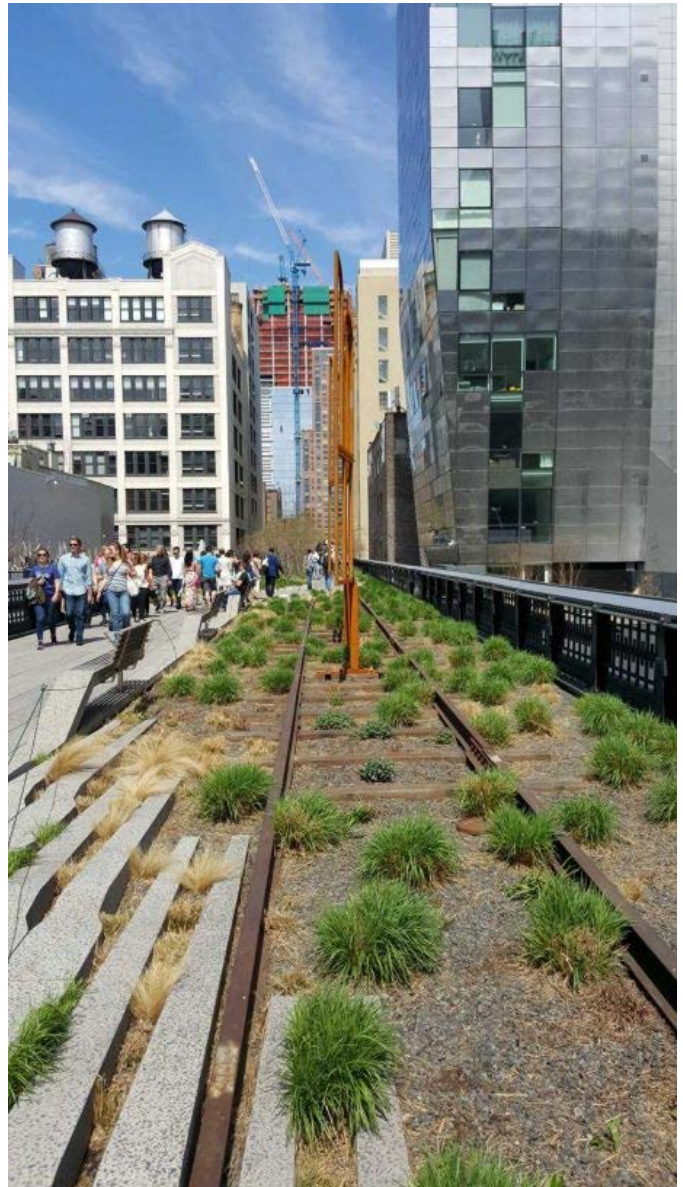


Photo: Betty Luman / Houston Chronicle

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The High Line, April 18, 2015: The elevated park has spurred an estimated \$2 billion in new development.

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have playground? Wouldn't children be in danger downtown?

Discovery Green, of course, has long since made those doubts seem ridiculous. The park's planners thought 500,000 visitors per year was an ambitious goal; in 2014, the park attracted more than 1.2 million. And it's estimated to have attracted more than \$1.5 billion in nearby development.

What would it take, I asked Hagstette, to get the Skypark off the ground?

The first hurdle, he said, is clear: Secure the real estate and the structure; convince TXDoT not to raze it. "The first step with Discovery Green was just the real-estate deal," Hagstette remembered. "It was, 'We have to be sure that nobody puts a Motel 6 on this piece of land.'"

The idea needs a group behind it, Hagstette said — someone to champion and steer the project, put meat on the concept's bones. Maybe it could be a nonprofit formed just for the cause. Or maybe it could be downtown's or Midtown's management district.

So I called Bob Eury, head of the Downtown Management District. Eury was excited by the prospect of I-45's rerouting; TXDoT's project, he said, will likely spawn hundreds of urban-renewal projects around downtown. The Skypark, he said, is just one of those proposals.

He seemed of two minds about the concept. "It's a really interesting idea,"

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## GRAY MATTERS

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**What would it take to turn Pierce Elevated into Pierce Skypark?**



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he said, "all that contiguous green space in a place never intended to be green space. But at the same time, the Pierce Elevated has been a barrier between downtown and Midtown for all these years. It's counterintuitive to say, 'Let's keep it!'"

Counterintuitive, of course, doesn't mean impossible. The Skypark is clearly the longest of long shots. But some longshots come in. And when they do, they pay off big.

Lisa Gray ( [REDACTED] ) runs Gray Matters.

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## TRANSPORTATION

# TxDOT Shares Plans to Remake I-45, Tear Down Pierce Elevated In Downtown Houston

The state agency is holding public meetings on plans for a big makeover of the I-45 North Freeway. But it's going to be a while before anything is built.

By: Gail Delaughter, April 29th, 2015 03:25 AM



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HPM – News 88.7

Houstonians Weigh In On Plans To Remake I-45 Nort...

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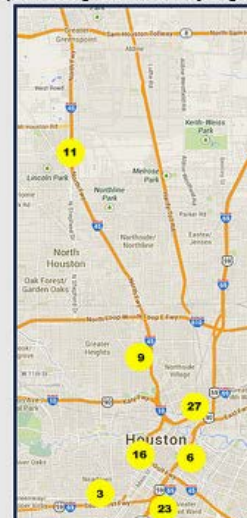
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## NEED FOR AND PURPOSE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

- Need for Proposed Project
  - Population and employment increases
  - Existing and future I-45 traffic
  - Current design standards and improved safety
  - Efficient traffic movement, including during evacuation events
- Purpose of Proposed Project
  - Manage congestion
  - Enhance safety
  - Improve mobility and operational efficiency

Top 100 Congested Roadway Segments





TxDOT says north Houston's growing population means I-45 is in desperate need of improvement, and it's floating some ideas to see what the public thinks.

At an information session at Houston Community College, TxDOT gathered input on some of those proposals. One of them includes tearing down the Pierce Elevated and relocating I-45 to the east side of downtown.

Longtime Midtown resident Scott Harbers likes the idea. He says every time the freeway backs up, traffic starts pouring into his neighborhood.

"Every intersection is completely blocked if the drivers can't get through here, and traffic is backed up from the Pierce Elevated all the way to Spur 527," Harbers says.

Any traffic relief on I-45 is still years away. TxDOT's Danny Perez says they have to do an environmental study before anything can be torn down or built.

"That's why we have the public comment period, because this is all proposed. This is not something that's locked in," Perez explains. "People can give their comments. We definitely take that into consideration."

Other plans for I-45 include managed lanes between Beltway 8 North and downtown.

There's another public meeting on the plan this Thursday at Davis High School on Quitman Street. It's from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.



TxDOT representatives were on hand to answer questions about proposed improvements for the I-45 North Freeway.

## TXDOT REPORT: NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

# TxDOT releases 3D video of I-45/North Houston highway improvement plan

By John Boyd | April 30, 2015 | Updated: April 30, 2015 5:26pm

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Photo By Parmley, Patricia/Texas Department of Transportation

1 of 37

A massive plan to add managed lanes along Interstate 45 and potentially revamp downtown freeway is detailed in this TXDot presentation.



Texas Department of Transportation this week dropped a YouTube sneak peak of north Houston's massive I-45 improvement project.



The **multi-billion dollar plan**, aimed at improving traffic flow between downtown and Houston's northern suburbs, was unveiled earlier this month.

TxDOT's animated video adds to prior renderings by demonstrating potential traffic flows along the new and/or improved roadways, including several interchanges.

For Houston commuters anxious to see what they're rerouted daily commute might look like years from now when the project is completed, the video is a must-watch.

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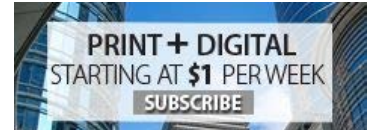
**RELATED: TxDOT unveils multi-billion dollar plan for north Houston highway improvement**

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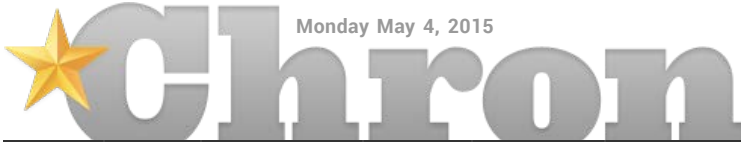
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## The Highwayman

Transportation in Houston with Dug Begley

### Final I-45 meeting Thursday, but years of work ahead

Posted on April 30, 2015 | By Dug Begley



The Texas Department of Transportation is proposing to re-route Interstate 45 – and to do so in such a way that would leave the roughly two miles of the Pierce Elevated out of a job. (Billy Smith II / Houston Chronicle)

Public meetings meant to debut the massive plan to remake Houston's downtown freeway system might be coming to an end, but it's hardly the last chance residents will have to poke and prod the plans.

Years of work remain on the **\$6 billion-plus project that shifts Interstate 45 to the east side of the central business district** and sinks I-45 and U.S. 59 so the freeways act as less prominent barriers. By moving the freeway, Texas Department of Transportation officials are also eliminating the elevated portion of I-45 along Pierce. The Pierce Elevated would then be removed, or perhaps **turned into a park or green space as some are suggesting.**

Thursday the third and final **scoping meeting on the Interstate 45 widening project** will take place from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Jefferson Davis High School, 1101 Quitman. Afterward, residents can file written or online comments until May 31.

Stretching from the **Sam Houston Tollway in northern Houston through the central business district**, the project has immense implications. Hundreds of thousands of drivers rely on I-45 daily, and many are not looking forward to the years of construction looming. Depending on when



Traffic travels along the segment of Interstate 45 commonly called the Pierce Elevated, on April 20.  
(Cody Duty / Houston Chronicle)

transportation officials can afford to start construction, work along some of the downtown segments could start after 2017, once the final environmental approvals are attained.

A fifth set of meetings — the first public meetings on I-45 were held in 2011, though some discussions date to 2003 — is likely next year, when officials will unveil their draft of the technical plan for the freeway.

Despite a lot of attention on the major components of the plan, such as moving the freeway, some important details are tiny (in comparison) fixes to local intersections. A sweeping ramp from

Chartres Street that connects to I-10 and I-45 is an example, officials said. The ramp, which makes a high arc with tight curves, slows traffic and leads to a difficult merger with the freeway.

Redesigning that ramp helps move traffic, which helps all lanes flow more effectively.

There is a similar potential ripple effect from the new design that will ease congestion throughout the Houston region, said Quincy Allen, district engineer for TxDOT's Houston office. After looking at some of the proposals, he said he is confident traffic on U.S. 59, Texas 288 and Interstate 10 will improve because of a better connection to I-45.

"Every one of these legs is getting something fixed on it," he said.

Many agree U.S. 59 southwest of the central business district might be the biggest beneficiary.

The inbound lanes are often backed up throughout the day — not just peak commuting periods — because of a tangle of messy connections with Spur 527, Texas 288 and I-45.

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## Purple City

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### Making Things Worse

Houston's freeways were built for Downtown-bound traffic. The freeway and tollway network is almost perfectly radial, reflecting the fact that City-led freeway planning predated the state highway department's involvement. The initial construction occurred between 1948 and 1972, when Downtown was the only game in town. Hines's Galleria opened in 1970; Schnitzer's Greenway Plaza in 1973.

Every freeway approaching Downtown loses about half its capacity to a series of braided ramps connecting to one-way streets. The remaining through capacity then mixes it up in a series of three interchanges. It is a robust, resilient design, which avoids having a single point of failure. Among US cities, only Los Angeles and Kansas City possess similar layouts; the same topology was extensively used in Eastern Bloc metro systems such as Prague, Kiev, and lines 1, 2, & 3 of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

A more common arrangement is to concentrate downtown traffic on a single central spine, as is done in Seattle, Denver, Atlanta, and Miami. The proposed reconstruction of IH-45 and the Downtown Houston freeway ring deletes the Pierce Elevated in favor of a much-expanded 59 and 10, essentially replicating Atlanta.

Downtown, and the Pierce Elevated in particular, are fairly congested even outside of rush hours. This happens for three reasons.

First, the assumption that half of all traffic is bound for Downtown no longer holds. As Houston has sprawled into an ever more multi-polar urban agglomeration, the Downtown freeway ring has shifted to a more regional role. Downtown has also been the primary benefactor of most transit improvements, including three light rail lines and a billion dollars' worth of barrier-separated

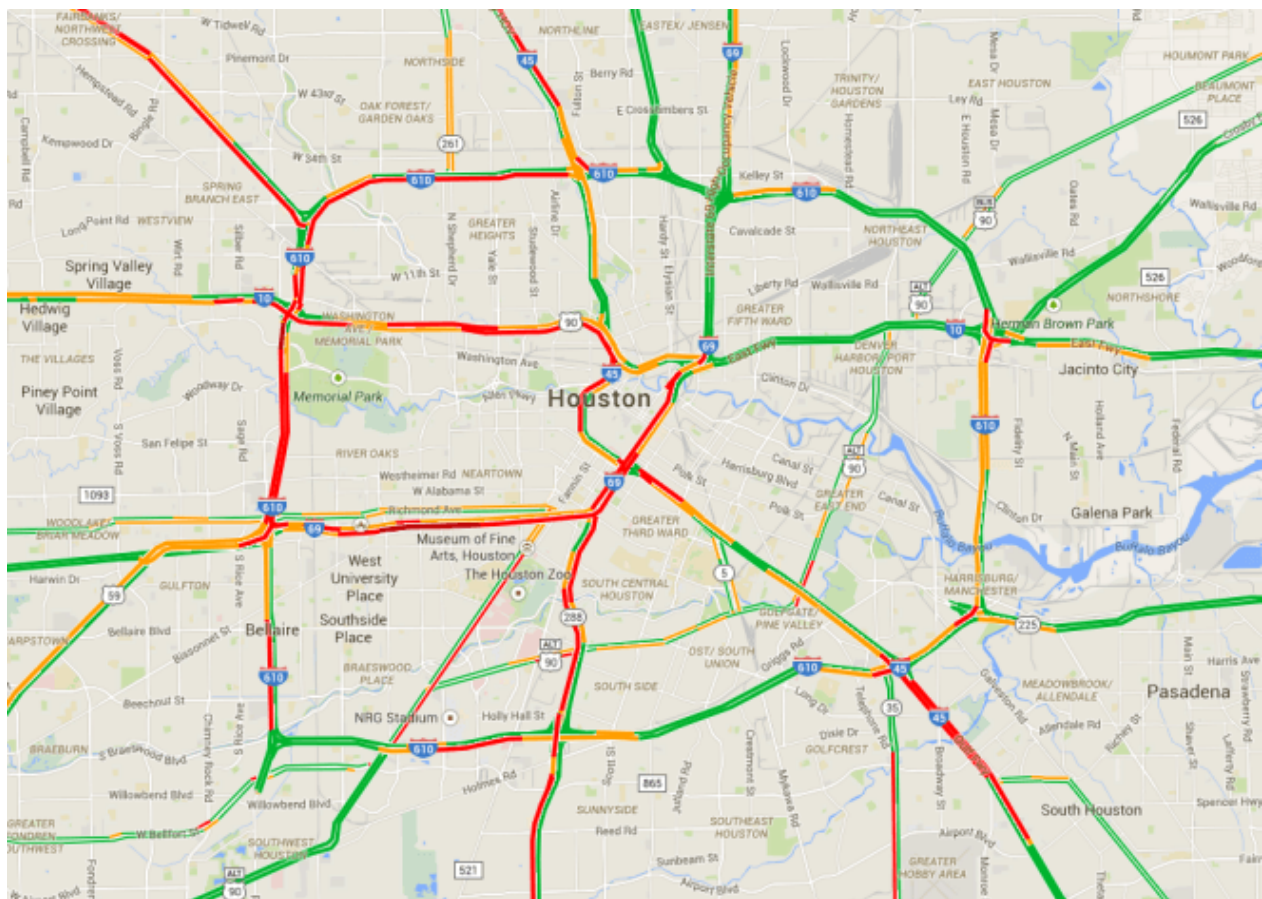


HOV and bus facilities. Over 30% of Downtown workers commute on transit, while the regional average is less than 4%. As a result, the reverse commute on IH 10 and US 59 is now worse than the traditional commute.

Second, the Downtown Ring was designed before modern standards for merges were developed. The original design relied extensively on abrupt center merges, and most of these have been removed. This has made the ring safer, but less able to process crosstown traffic.

Third, most of Houston's growth in the last 50 years has occurred west of IH 45 and SH 288. The East and Eastex Freeways, which form the northern and eastern segments of the loop, are relatively uncongested relative to the region as a whole. This tends to concentrate a plurality of crosstown traffic onto the Pierce Elevated.

To visualize this, here's Google's "typical" traffic for 5:30pm on Friday, culled from the averages of smartphone users running Google maps.



Typical Houston Traffic, 5:30pm, Friday

All of the macro trends are visible here. The inbound Katy and Southwest

Freeways are stop-and-go as traffic queues up to process through the Downtown Ring. The inbound Gulf and South Freeways are largely at free-flow, but these two have a smaller queue where traffic waits to get onto the Downtown Ring.

Once this traffic has merged, things flow smoothly. The northbound Pierce Elevated flows well past the merge from 45/59/288, while the southbound Pierce flows well once the traffic from Houston Avenue and Allen Parkway has gotten on board. How bad is this bottleneck today? One way to answer this question is to compare the lane count approaching downtown with the lane count passing through. By neglecting the myriad ramps to “Downtown Destinations”, we can have a rough measure of the downtown ring’s ability to process crosstown traffic. At the south end, this looks like so:



Three lanes of 59 enter after the Spur leaves the mainline, while four lanes of 288 merge in. The inbound Gulf Freeway loses two lanes to the 59/288 system, but future construction will relocate the 59 connection to the existing high-level collector-distributor, freeing up the ability for three lanes to continue. We can subtract an additional lane for traffic from 59 and 288 bound for the outbound Gulf Freeway, leaving 9 total entering lanes and 7 receiving lanes.

At the north end of Downtown, the situation is similar:



Four lanes of the North Freeway mix with four lanes of the Katy Freeway. Where 10 and 45 traffic merge into 10, three lanes continue. 45 picks up more, but loses several lanes to downtown, leaving three heading into the dual-sided merge with Houston and Allen.

The current proposed schematic for the reconstruction of IH 45 envisions a redo of the Downtown Ring (large PDF). This design promises to relieve congestion by adding lanes around Downtown. The problem is, it adds more lanes coming into Downtown than it does going around it. The upcoming 288 Managed Lanes project will add still more radial capacity. As a result, the percentage of lanes available for use by crosstown traffic is actually reduced.

Here's the north end again:



By connecting the existing HOV skyway into a new crosstown managed lane, and by converting the existing exit-only to 45 north into an optional lane for 45 north or south, the current schematic brings the number of approaching lanes on IH 10 to six. Adding managed lanes on 45 likewise brings that number to six. However, both 45 managed lanes are connected to the existing Milam Street ramp, with a one-lane connection to the mainline provided in the southbound direction only. Still more lanes are diverted into the Downtown Connector, a mirror of the 59 Spur which preserves the direct ramp to City Hall.



By the time all of these ramps have left the building, only six free lanes plus the managed lanes remain. This reduces crosstown capacity to less than 60%. The south side isn't much better:



The current schematic eliminates the inbound 59 bottleneck at the Spur, by

continuing five lanes through Midtown. However, the same bottlenecks are kept downstream; there's a short weave with 288 traffic before two lanes go onto 45 north, merging with two lanes from the Gulf Freeway and then tapering down to three – virtually the same configuration as today.

Any transport improvement will bring with it some “induced demand.” The improvements represented by the 45 managed lanes, the 288 managed lanes, and the removal of the 59/Spur bottleneck will lead to more cars entering the Downtown Ring. If the past 20 years are a guide, an increasing number of those trips will be crosstown and reverse commuters. By substantially increasing capacity into Downtown without a commensurate increase in capacity through and around Downtown, we are creating tomorrow's bottleneck.

 April 30, 2015    Purple City

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From the Houston Business Journal

[:http://www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/breaking-ground/2015/04/houston-real-estate-heavyweights-all-for-downtown.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/houston/blog/breaking-ground/2015/04/houston-real-estate-heavyweights-all-for-downtown.html)

# Houston real estate heavyweights all for downtown highway transformation

Apr 30, 2015, 11:41am CDT



[Roxanna Asgarian](#)

Reporter- Houston Business Journal



A Texas Department of Transportation proposal to realign Interstate 45 downtown with Highway 59 would render the Pierce Elevated, a portion of I-45 that runs along Pierce Street through the central business district, unused. At a recent Urban Land Institute panel on downtown Houston, real estate experts were united in support of the plan to demolish or transform the Pierce Elevated.

The group of panelists, representing various sectors of the real estate industry including office, multifamily and retail, all agreed that the plan would lessen or remove a barrier between areas of downtown that could result in improved connectivity and more development.

"I couldn't be more enthusiastic about it," said [Sanford Criner](#), vice chairman at CBRE with more than 40 years' experience with office leasing and development. "Mobility is always important, but our problem isn't getting people downtown, it's what can we do with them when they're here?"

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[Suzanne Anderson](#), vice president at Midway with 25 years of retail experience, said the proposed change would increase retailers' desire to enter the area.

"We need to get that pioneer retailer downtown, and then others will follow. There's interest for a Target or a Macy's. But they are looking for co-tenancy and a sense of place," Anderson said. "This is an exciting opportunity. Anyone can build a building, but if you build a sense of place that enriches people's lives, that's when you're really successful."

TXDOT is still receiving community input by hosting public meetings, [as Houston Public Media](#)

[reported](#). An idea has been floated that instead of demolishing the Pierce Elevated, an elevated park similar to Manhattan's High Line could be a draw for retailers, residents and office tenants alike. [The Houston Chronicle reported](#) on the idea's feasibility, and one group has developed preliminary plans and a website, [calling their idea Pierce Skypark](#).

"When it comes to office, people always say, 'Do the employers want to come down there?' And that's the opposite of the right question. If employees want to come downtown, then employers will come," Criner said. "If you didn't have a freeway there — put a park there. What a great idea! I can't believe TXDOT came up with this idea. Bless 'em."

Roxanna covers commercial real estate for the Houston Business Journal. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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# Massive I-45 project would remove Pierce Elevated, add lanes

## **\$6 billion-plus plan moves key freeway, razes Pierce Elevated**

By Dug Begley | April 22, 2015 | Updated: May 1, 2015 3:20pm

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## PROPOSED RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE: SEGMENT 3



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Photo: Texas Department Of Transportation

### IMAGE 1 OF 37

A TXDot presentation shows planned changes to I-45.

A massive reconstruction of Interstate 45 through most of Houston would topple one of downtown's most frustrating barriers - the Pierce Elevated - and move the freeway east of the central business district.

That's just one of the major changes Texas Department of Transportation officials included in the \$6 billion-plus plan to be unveiled Thursday. It would make I-45 practically unrecognizable to those familiar with its current downtown-area configuration.

Two managed lanes in each direction will be added to the freeway between the Sam Houston Tollway and U.S. 59 south of the city's central business district. Planners recommend moving I-45 to the east side of the city's core, a change that an analysis suggests could increase downtown freeway speeds. Officials called it a once-in-a-lifetime



change that would increase mobility and improve the city center.

"After having those freeways in the city for the better part of 70 years, it's challenging and exciting to have the opportunity to come back and reshape how they fit," said Bob Eury, executive director of the Houston Downtown Management District.

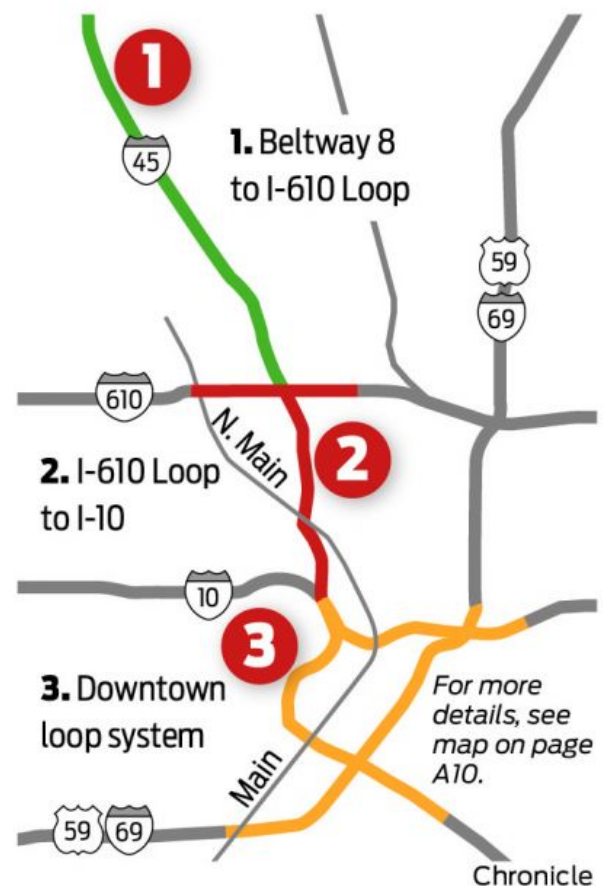
The first of three public meetings this month is scheduled for Thursday night, 5:30 to 7:30, at Aldine Ninth Grade School, 10650 North Freeway.

Residents and businesses will get their first detailed look at the plans. In 2013, when neighborhood leaders got a look at early versions, some feared the reconstruction would leave a big scar across their communities.

"I am really looking with dreaded anticipation for what they are going to propose," said Jim Weston, president of the I-45 coalition, a group of residents tracking the freeway project. "There's a lot of engineering and lots of questions about the design that really, I feel, TxDOT hasn't answered."

Remaking I-45 will take years, with

## I-45 project segments



public meetings and more detailed analysis remaining. Officials said it is too early to pinpoint an exact cost, but transportation officials predict all of the work will cost "north of \$6 billion," said Quincy Allen, district engineer for TxDOT's Houston office.

The final cost will be determined by when officials can start construction, likely in phases starting in downtown after 2017. The central business district parts of the plan alone will cost about \$3 billion.

Much of that cost comes from moving the freeway. Eventually, I-45 will move from the west side of downtown and follow the same route U.S. 59 does now east of the George R. Brown Convention Center, according to the plans. The two freeways will split where they now cross near Pierce Street.

Perhaps just as importantly, transportation officials are designing segments of the new or combined freeways as depressed roadways, meaning local street traffic flows above them, similar to U.S. 59 west of Spur 527. East of the convention center and between Cavalcade and Quitman streets, the space above the freeways could be developed as open green space or a park-like setting.

### Pierce Elevated out

Moving the freeway means the segment of I-45 commonly called the Pierce Elevated will come down, eliminating what some consider a major barrier - real or symbolic - in downtown Houston. Opening up that space would create opportunities for new development, said City Councilman Ed Gonzales.

As Midtown and the central business district grow - especially with more residences - tying the neighborhoods closer together is made easier when barriers to walking and biking, such as the Pierce Elevated, are removed, Eury said.

The same applies along the east side of downtown, he said, where TxDOT is designing I-45 and U.S. 59 as depressed freeways.

There is, however, an argument for turning the Pierce into a biking and walking corridor. Two proposals posted online advocate turning the Pierce into an elevated pedestrian space, akin to what other cities have done with rail lines and overpasses.

"It would be among the most distinctive recreation trails in the United States," said Oscar Slotboom, author of a book on Houston's freeways and their history.

A separate plan, called Pierce Skypark, keeps the elevated features but redesigns them into similar walking and biking trails, with many architectural features.

Backers of the plan note the Pierce is three times larger than New York City's popular High Line.

After years of discussion and talks with local leaders and neighborhood groups, TxDOT leaders in Houston said they believe the plan is crucial to easing congestion not only along I-45 but on other major freeways that connect with it. It incorporates many features residents said were vital, the officials said.

'A tremendous fix'

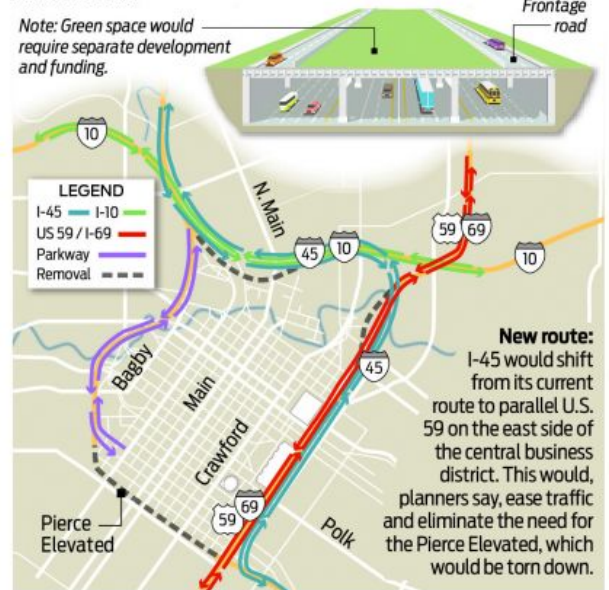
## Moving along I-45

Plans to expand Interstate 45 from the Sam Houston Tollway north of Houston to the central business district include portions where the freeway could be depressed and covered. The freeway would also move to the east side of the central business district.

### Proposed improvements near N. Main:



**Sink and cap:** Between Cavalcade and Quitman, officials plan to depress the freeway so street traffic flows above, then suspend the frontage roads over the freeway. The design reduces the need to acquire more right of way and might allow for the freeway to be capped, and green space added above it.



Source: Texas Department of Transportation

Ken Ellis / Chronicle

"This is a tremendous fix," said Allen, the top TxDOT official in Houston. "I really like this plan, and I think it gives us certainly what we need."

Broken into three segments - the Sam Houston Tollway to Loop 610, loop to Interstate 10 and I-10 to U.S. 59 - the portions of I-45 rank 11th, ninth and 16th on the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's most congested highways in Texas. Nearby segments of I-10, U.S. 59 and Texas 288 also rank in the top 30 of the most-congested list.



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Analysis of the changes showed average freeway speeds along the reconfigured area would improve by 35 percent, with trips in the morning peak increasing 24 mph.

"We've never had numbers like that," Allen said.

Much of the improvement comes from subtle changes to how the freeways connect to one another. By removing some of the chokepoints and smoothing connections while moving I-45, officials believe traffic can move faster. This extends the project's significance beyond the immediately affected neighborhoods, officials said.

"I-45 is a strategic corridor linking the half-trillion-dollar regional economy of our region



to the almost equally large regional economy of Dallas/Fort Worth," Texas Transportation Commissioner member Jeff Moseley said. "Texas' future is directly dependent on these regions supporting each other in the movement of goods and services."

### ***Plans and impacts vary***

The first test of the proposal will come when the hundreds of organizations and agencies - many with various priorities - pick through the plans.

In the northernmost areas - mostly bordered by commercial properties - it is a simple, though massive, widening project. Officials plan to add a frontage road lane in each direction, taking additional right of way on the west side from the tollway to Airline Drive, then shifting to add property east of the freeway from Airline to Loop 610.

Within Loop 610, the freeway will be widened and remain above most local streets, south to Cavalcade. Between 10 feet and 80 feet of additional right of way will be acquired to add the managed lanes, shoulders and bike and pedestrian amenities along the frontage roads.

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Besides moving the entire freeway downtown, the most dramatic changes drivers can expect to see will be between Cavalcade and I-10, where planners propose sinking the lanes and building two-lane frontage roads and sidewalks in each direction atop the freeway.

Weston, the I-45 coalition member, lives two streets from the freeway and

said he and his neighbors want to keep that distance. A plan that lowers the freeway to reduce noise and light - similar to how U.S. 59 is depressed west of Spur 527 - would receive cautious community support, he said.

"I think people will be resigned to accept that because that is within the framework," he said. "The main criteria is they stay in the right of way."

Allen said the depressed portions of the freeway will be designed so they can be covered and converted to green space, similar to how officials developed Klyde Warren Park above Spur 366 in downtown Dallas.

The park, considered by some the heart of downtown, is a three-block space over the freeway with amenities ranging from a performance space and dog park to ping-pong tables, a restaurant and Internet access.

The park was a partnership that relied heavily on the formation of a nonprofit to operate and manage it.

A similar initiative or agency would have to partner with TxDOT for any capping north or east of the central business district, Allen said.

That cooperation, and further discussions, will happen over the next few months or years.

"We are early on in the biggest project we are going to see in our lifetime,"



**Study finds Houston traffic congestion worsening**

said Lonnie Hoogeboom, director of  
planning and design for the downtown management district.



**Dug Begley**

Transportation  
Writer, Houston

Chronicle

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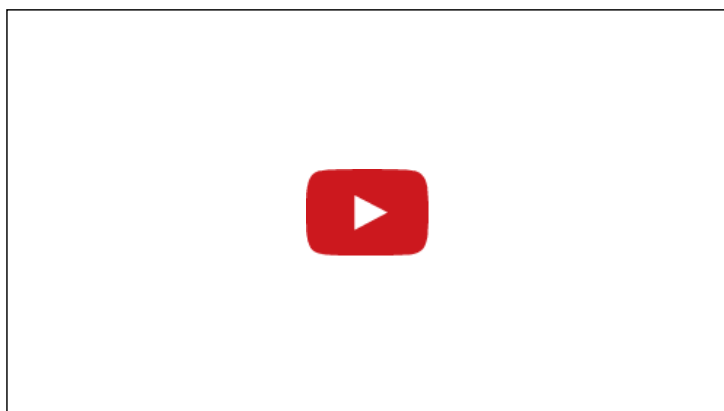


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NORTH FREEWAY DOWNTOWN REWRAP

## Wacky TxDOT I-45 Redo Renderings Now Available in Mind-Boggling Video Format



IF YOU WERE dazzled by the wide swaths of concrete laneage and complicated color-coded spaghetti interchange entanglements in the TxDOT renderings [released last week](#) — but had trouble comprehending the massive scale of the proposed reroute of I-45 around Downtown — you'll want to try this second go at it. The state transportation agency has now produced a video version of its freeway-rewrapping proposal, complete with tiny little animated cars and trucks moving along 3-D representations of those new wide surfaces. It's so mesmerizing, many viewers may not even notice what happened to the **Pierce Elevated**.

Previously on Swampplot: [The 5 Wackiest Images from TxDOT's Plans To Reroute I-45 and Abandon the Pierce Elevated](#)

Video: [TxDOT](#), via [Houston Chronicle](#)

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## GRAY MATTERS

# Tear down the Pierce Elevated. Make it Pierce Promenade.

Forget the SkyPark. Let's think ground-level.

By John S. Jacob, for the Houston Chronicle | May 3, 2015

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Photo: John Jacob

IMAGE 1 OF 6

## Barcelona's Las Ramblas: Why can't Houston have this kind of pedestrian promenade?

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The I-45 elevated freeway along Pierce Street **is going away**. The freeway is dead! But now we hear cries of "long live the freeway," albeit in a new guise as **the Pierce Skypark**. There is a move to reconfigure the Pierce Elevated into a green park that would resemble New York City's High Line park, but on steroids. This is big Houston thinking, we are told. Way outside the box. Something worthy of Space City — modern, sleek, stylish. Yes, it would be cool. For sure an improvement over what is there now. But maybe it would be a bit too cool for its own good.

This is indeed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Houston — the lifetime of the city, not just a single generation of citizens. "Cool" is not enough. This is an opportunity to build an unparalleled civic space in one of the most important places we could build it. It is an opportunity to connect two of the city's most important districts, Downtown and Midtown, long severed by the Pierce Elevated. It is also an opportunity to reconnect to the Bayou in ways we haven't been able to do so in more than a century.

Let's build a walkable promenade that could rival Barcelona's Las Ramblas or even Paris' venerable Champs-Élysées. And let's put Buffalo Bayou on the front door of this promenade. This is thinking big — but the kind of big that will last centuries, not just a cool few years.







Photo: Rick Steves, RICK STEVES

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The Champs Elysees, as seen from the top of the Arc de Triomphe: a broad street that accommodates both cars and pedestrians.

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Sure — an elevated park has a very large cool factor. A Pierce Skypark would be a great place to hang out and look out over downtown and midtown, perhaps from a new chic restaurant. But the Skypark will not connect these two important centers of city life. By virtue of its elevation, the Skypark cannot form a visceral connection between these two core areas. The High Line railway never divided Manhattan like the Pierce Elevated divided Downtown from Midtown.

We could make the Skypark pretty, but we would still be stuck with the under-the-bridge zone. Take a look at this zone today — the prettiest areas under the bridge are parking lots. If this hasn't been an attractive zone for development before now, why would that change with a park on the superstructure?

If the Pierce comes down, we could have a pedestrian promenade like few others in the U.S., or the world, for that matter. The width of Pierce Street and the Pierce Elevated, from building face to building face, is just over 200 feet, not far off of the 215 feet or so of the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Barcelona's Las Ramblas, considered by many to be the world's best pedestrian promenade, is only about 115 to 130 feet wide at its widest.

What could you fit in two hundred feet? We could have everything the Skypark could give us and so much more. For one, very wide sidewalks and pedestrian zones, with ample room for outdoor restaurant seating, for outdoor markets and festivals, and for civic gatherings. Abundant green space as well — green space directly tied to the underlying soil, something not available on the Skypark.

There would be room for very large trees, for example. Trees on the Skypark would be limited to planters — you can't get big trees in planters. Pedestrian places on the Gulf Coast need trees — large trees that can only thrive when planted in native soils. Very importantly, the runoff from impervious surfaces (necessarily part of either the Skypark or the Promenade) could be filtered through the soil directly through park-like bioswales and rainways that would filter stormwater headed to Buffalo Bayou.

And still there would be room for cars. Even Las Ramblas has lanes for cars. But this would be an environment designed fundamentally for pedestrians, where cars have to

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## GRAY MATTERS

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**'There's never been a better journalism professor'**



**Tear down the Pierce Elevated. Make it Pierce Promenade.**



**Reading for the masses**



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**I have a type. And this man was it.**

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make do, the opposite of practically every other street in Houston. The north and south bound lanes could be separated by a large walkable median, and features like bulb-outs could be installed to slow down traffic.

The Pierce Skypark for all its coolness is still more of a novelty than it is fundamental infrastructure for civic vitality. Public streets are our public rooms. Too long we have ignored these public community rooms and retreated into the privacy of our homes and office buildings. Great communities must have great public spaces — great gathering rooms, so to speak. These are our "front rooms" where we gather with each other as well as with those who come to visit us. We have so very few of these kinds of spaces in Houston.

The Pierce Promenade could do that like no other space could, including the SkyPark. An elevated park cannot be completely integrated into the street life below — there would be no seamless connection between commercial and public space — both hard and green space, like there would be on the Promenade.

Very importantly, tearing down the elevated freeway and building a Promenade that integrates green space with civic hardscapes gives us an opportunity to reconnect to the Bayou in ways we haven't done before. Houston basically turned its back on the bayou and turned it into a sewer.

Over the last few years we have undone so many of the wrongs done to our beloved bayou — but we have in place difficult-to-overcome infrastructure that impedes a complete reconnection to the Bayou. Buffalo Bayou Park to the west of downtown is coming together in beautiful ways — but access is constrained by two relatively high-speed "parkways." Downtown itself turned completely away from the bayou. We have added some wonderful park space in this area — but it is behind everything, and therefore not very well integrated into the downtown streetlife.

Here is our chance to put Buffalo Bayou at our front door — the front door being a green and walkable Pierce Promenade. We must carefully design the parkways that TXDOT shows crossing the Bayou to maximize pedestrian use, while accommodating cars. A walkable waterfront here would raise the entire Buffalo Park system to a new level.

The Pierce Skypark is a cool idea — even a great idea. Clearly we need to do something innovative and lasting with this new space. Turning it into just another street would be a total waste. But we must undo the bad that was done by the Pierce Elevated: the destruction of vital urban fabric for traffic efficiency. We need a bigger idea for that. We must reclaim this space in ways that increase usable and lively civic space by building exceptional urban fabric. Perhaps a piece or two of the Pierce Elevated could be left in place — a few pieces serving as terraces could accentuate the pedestrian nature of the Promenade. But the Promenade itself must be literally grounded in the Houston that could have been, and the Houston that we still hope for.

John Jacob, Ph.D., is president of the Eastwood Civic Association, in Houston's East End. He is professor and extension specialist with the Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences Department of Texas A&M University (Affiliated with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Sea Grant). Opinions expressed here are solely his own.

**Bookmark Gray Matters.** Maybe it would be a bit too cool for its own good.

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## Opportunity Urbanist

Houston strategies from Tory Gattis

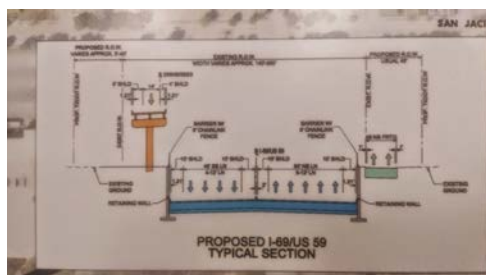
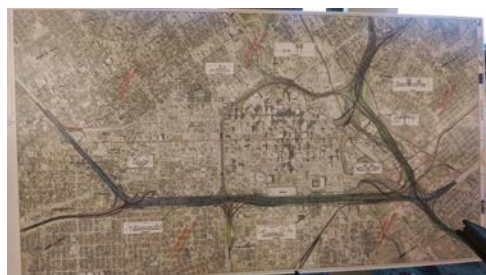
# Thoughts on TXDoT's ambitious new plan for I45N

Posted on May 3, 2015 | By Tory Gattis

[PRINT](#)

Before getting into this week's post, just a heads up in case you missed it: my [Good/Bady/Ugly MetroRail post](#) from a couple weeks ago got refined into [a Sunday feature op-ed in the Chronicle today](#). They even used a few of my pictures, which was cool. Most of the feedback on it has been quite positive.

But the real topic this week after attending the TXDoT information session at HCC is their [massive \\$6+ billion plan to redevelop I45N](#), with the much publicized feature of routing it around the north and east sides of downtown and closing the Pierce Elevated (more on that later). Much less publicized but almost as epic for many people: it also fixes the much-hated 59N bottleneck at the Spur 527 split where 5 lanes compress down to 3. That bottleneck routinely backs up for miles at all hours of the day, not just rush hour. As you can see below, the plan extends down to that part of 59, and includes burying the elevated as well as expanding it to 5 lanes inbound and 4 lanes outbound, a significant improvement over the 3 each direction today. (click the pics for larger versions)



My primary feedback to TXDoT at the information session involves the new westside downtown connector, which is far too downtown-centric in my opinion (see pic below). It ignores the vast and growing populations of densifying Midtown, Montrose, and Washington Ave that need access

to these freeways with connectors from Bagby/Brazos, Allen Parkway, and Memorial, respectively.

Not directly connecting Allen Parkway is an especially large oversight, IMHO. Improving these connections will also reduce the load on I10W inside the loop, which is where many of these people drive for freeway access today. I'd even be in favor of keeping the existing westside ramps/connectors as they are currently configured for simplicity and saving money (even without a Memorial connection).



My next big set of feedback involves the new I45 managed lanes, which simply dump downtown instead of connecting through. Most of my readers know I've been a longtime advocate of having a comprehensive managed lane network across the city that would enable express commuter bus services from any neighborhood to any job center. That would include communities on the northside that need express commute services to the Medical Center, UH, Greenway Plaza, or other major destinations and job centers on the southside, and vice versa. If the lanes terminate downtown, then that's not possible. **TXDoT needs to adopt this comprehensive managed lane network philosophy now (as opposed to downtown-centric), so that these lanes all connect together over the coming decades of construction.**

Since I'm sending TXDoT this blog post as official public comment/feedback, some other smaller items of feedback are...

- I45 needs three sustained lanes both directions all the way through downtown, not two.
- The new I10 express lanes on the north side of downtown crunch down from two lanes to one on the west end near Houston Ave, which seems like a bad bottleneck in the making.
- Another future bottleneck is 45 northbound where it drops from six lanes to four at the North Main exit. At least five of those lanes need to continue through – crunch down shoulders if necessary in the very tight right-of-way.
- Runnels in the East End needs to continue to connect directly to the feeder and the freeway entrance ramps. Navigation (which connects to Runnels) is a growing destination street.

Immediately after TXDoT announced this plan, two separate but similar visions came forward for converting the closed Pierce Elevated into a park similar to the extremely popular High Line in NYC. My friend Oscar Slotboom of "[Houston Freeways](#)" book fame makes [this Pierce Elevated Park proposal](#), and another group has made [this proposal for Pierce Sky Park](#). As beautiful as the renderings at Pierce Sky Park are, they're a little misleading since they assume the complete closure on both the west and south sides of downtown, when TXDoT plans to keep connector ramps to the west side, including over the bayou. It's likely only the south Pierce would be available for park development. [Lisa Gray gave both proposals a great writeup in the Chronicle](#), and they also received [editorial board support](#). **I think it would be an amazing city amenity** – and hope TXDoT will take them seriously and the downtown folks will keep an open mind, no matter how much they've wanted to bring down the Pierce Elevated for so long as a barrier between Downtown and Midtown. The barrier is less the structure itself than the constant pounding of cars and trucks – converted into a quiet park along with some enhancements underneath would remove the barrier psychology. Based on the NYC High Line, a park conversion instead of demolition could pay for itself many times over with increased land values their associated property taxes. In fact, it could actually cost less than demolition!

*"The High Line in New York City generated \$500 million in tax revenue from a \$150 million investment, according to John Cryer, a spokesman for Pierce Skypark."*

My suggestion would be for the [Midtown Management District](#) to officially take over as the champion of this Pierce park proposal, given that they both benefit the most and can organizationally sustain the vision and the energy over the many years it would take (the earliest it might actually happen would be the early to mid 2020s after construction is complete and the Pierce is closed).



If you'd like to learn more about the project yourself, [here's the official TXDoT page](#) along with [this slide presentation](#) which includes detailed renderings. They're taking public feedback until May 31st.

**UPDATE:** A TXDoT visualization video of the project.



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On this edition of Houston Matters, we'll discuss the impact of low oil prices on the industry with Christopher Ross, Executive Professor of Finance at the University of Houston's Bauer College of Business. And we'll learn more about the Subsea Systems Institute from Dr. Ramanan Krishnamoorti, Chief Energy Officer at the University of Houston, and acting Vice President/Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology Transfer.

Also this hour: The Texas Department of Transportation last week unveiled some potential options to address traffic congestion along Interstate 45 through downtown Houston, in order to gauge public opinion. Among the potential changes under consideration: rerouting I-45 to the eastern side of downtown, where US 59 runs today. Another idea floated: tearing down the Pierce Elevated and turning the area into green space. News 88.7 FM transportation reporter Gail Delaughter attended a TxDOT information session last week, and will join us to share some of what she saw and heard.

Then: The Houston City Council recently approved a plan to overhaul Memorial Park. We'll find out what the plan entails, as Houston Matters' Michael Hagerty checks in with the Houston Chronicle's Mike Morris.

And: The Houston Astros swept the Seattle Mariners over the weekend, extending their winning streak to 10 games, and the Astros' lead to seven games in the American League West. The 10 game streak is the franchise's longest since 2004, and has propelled the Astros to the best record in the American League. We'll discuss the ball club's continued success, preview the Houston Rockets' 2nd round NBA playoff match-up with the Los Angeles Clippers, and review the Houston Texans' NFL draft selections with M.K. Bower, who joins us most Mondays to discuss the latest developments in Houston sports.

Houston Matters starts at noon. Join us on air: 713-440-8870 or [talk@houstonmatters.org](mailto:talk@houstonmatters.org).

Audio of today's program will be available here after 3:00 p.m.

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## The Highwayman

Transportation in Houston with Dug Begley

# Meetings over, but discussion of I-45 project continues

Posted on May 4, 2015 | By Dug Begley

PRINT 3

### TxDOT plan would reshape I-45

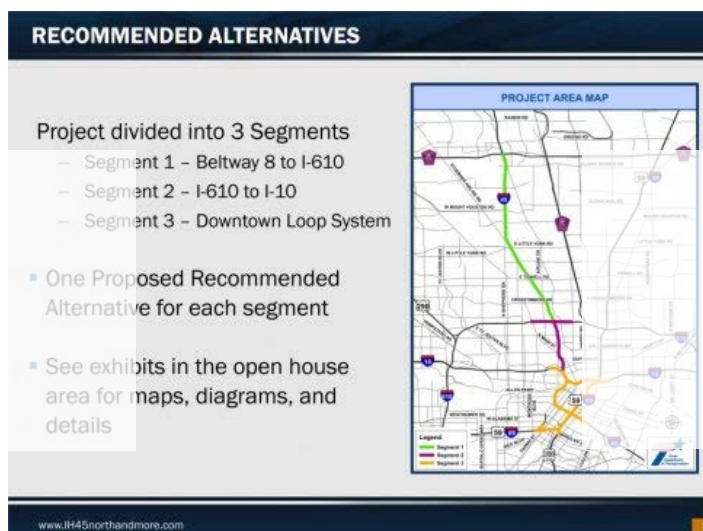


IMAGE 1 OUT OF 13

Texas Department of Transportation

A massive plan to add managed lanes along Interstate 45 and potentially revamp downtown freeway is detailed in this TXDOT presentation.

It's no surprise what could turn out to be Houston's largest freeway project ever continues to generate debate, though the public meetings for this round are over.

Texas Department of Transportation officials last month laid out the plan for a **\$6 billion-plus redesign of Interstate 45** from the Sam Houston Tollway near Bush Airport through the central business district. Broken into three segments, plans call for widening the freeway and adding two managed lanes in each direction, and shifting the freeway to the east side of downtown to run parallel to U.S. 59.

Moving the lanes and the demolition of the Pierce Elevated have dominated the discussion, with a groundswell beginning for saving the Pierce and converting it into a park. It'll be years before any construction starts, so for now the discussions are very preliminary, and subject to changes in the

TxDOT plan.



Traffic travels along the segment of Interstate 45 commonly called the Pierce Elevated, on April 20. (Cody Duty / Houston Chronicle)

Meanwhile, throughout the meetings many people had a lot of positive comments for the plan, even if they dreaded the years of construction it will cause. Tory Gattis, a local blogger who has advocated for both better highways and more use of managed lanes and express buses, said **there was a lot to like with TxDOT's proposal.**

Much less publicized but almost as epic for many people: It also fixes the much-hated (U.S. 59 northbound) bottleneck at the Spur 527 split where five lanes compress down to three. That bottleneck

routinely backs up for miles at all hours of the day, not just rush hour. ... The plan extends down to that part of (U.S.) 59, and includes burying the elevated as well as expanding it to five lanes inbound and four lanes outbound, a significant improvement over the three each direction today.

Gattis also found some cause for alarm, especially with how connections are preserved on the city's west side for downtown access.

It ignores the vast and growing populations of densifying Midtown, Montrose and Washington Avenue that need access to these freeways with connectors from Bagby/Brazos, Allen Parkway, and Memorial, respectively. Not directly connecting Allen Parkway is an especially large oversight, IMHO. Improving these connections will also reduce the load on (Interstate 10 westbound) inside the loop, which is where many of these people drive for freeway access today. I'd even be in favor of keeping the existing westside ramps/connectors as they are currently configured for simplicity and saving money.

Overall, many have lauded TxDOT's plan for being forward-looking and not just slapping more lanes to the side or on top of the existing ones. Much of the change happened because of years of discussion, as Kyle Shelton of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research pointed out in a **thorough look at the freeway and the Pierce Elevated's place** in Houston history.

TxDOT should be applauded for its bold vision for the future of Houston's highway network and for its engagement with residents in the process. Over the past 10 years, thousands of Houstonians have weighed in on what they would like to see happen in the I-45 corridor. More than 1,000 pages of public comments have been collected since 2011.

Given the fact that major infrastructure will be in place for decades after its construction, public feedback is crucial to helping TxDOT make choices about future projects. In the case of I-45 plans, input and continued engineering refinement led TxDOT away from bizarre ideas for tunneling express lanes below city **streets.**

Not everyone is convinced TxDOT's plan will improve traffic. Another blog, Purple City, notes it **could lead to more congestion** as we concentrate traffic into one large straightway, rather than a radial route around the central business district.

The improvements represented by the 45 managed lanes, the 288 managed lanes, and the removal of the 59/Spur bottleneck will lead to more cars entering the Downtown Ring. If the past 20 years are a guide, an increasing number of those trips will be crosstown and reverse commuters. By substantially increasing capacity into Downtown without a commensurate increase in capacity through and around Downtown, we are creating tomorrow's bottleneck.

There are also dozens of smaller site-specific issues that will generate attention. Clayton Homes, the city housing authority property northeast of the central business district, is wiped out by the new I-45/U.S. confluence, along with some buildings east of the George R. Brown Convention Center. Commercial properties between Loop 610 and the Sam Houston Tollway will be abolished en masse.

It's important to note the specifics and details will be refined, first for an environmental review next year, and then a final assessment. Then TxDOT and local officials have to figure out how to pay for



it. That's likely to take "every tool in the toolbox and some we don't know yet," said Quincy Allen, TxDOT's Houston district engineer.

The [comment period on the proposal](#) has been extended to May 31.

Categories: [Construction](#), [General](#), [Interstate 45](#)

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## Pierce Elevated may go back to the future

Plans to reimagine the overpass that cuts between Midtown and Downtown harken back to an older version of central Houston

Kyle Shelton | [REDACTED] | May 4, 2015

Tweet

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Image from “Designing a Transportation System with you in Mind” City of Houston, Harris County, Texas Highway Department, February 1962.

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Could Houston reconnect its downtown grid? If a new TxDOT plan for I-45 gets approved, midtown and downtown would look a lot more like they did in 1962.

Some of the proposed plans for the highway are quite dramatic, like removing the Pierce Elevated; building greenspaces atop capped sections of downtown freeways; and creating massive new interchanges for parallel freeways that mix managed lanes, main lanes, and frontage roads to reach -- in at least one section -- 30+ lanes across.

While these visions might appear to be the product of a sleep-deprived highway engineer’s late-night inspiration, there’s more to them than that. They’re a mashup of urbanist desires—highway teardowns and connective greenspaces—with the realities of living in a sprawling metropolitan area that use massive new highways to confront traffic.

They are, in fact, just a few of the many changes the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing for a rebuilt I-45 and downtown highway system in Houston. The current project, which has been in the planning stages for more than a decade, intends to give a serious facelift to I-45 from Beltway 8 through downtown.

TxDOT should be applauded for its bold vision for the future of Houston's highway network and for its engagement with residents in the process. Over the past 10 years, thousands of Houstonians have weighed in on what they would like to see happen in the I-45 corridor. More than 1,000 pages of public comments have been collected since 2011.

Given the fact that major infrastructure will be in place for decades after its construction, public feedback is crucial to helping TxDOT make choices about future projects. In the case of I-45 plans, input and continued engineering refinement led TxDOT away from bizarre ideas for tunneling express lanes below city streets.

### A new role for roads

TxDOT's proposed plans importantly move the agency away from its traditional approach to improving urban highways: widening and decking existing roads. While many such projects, like the building of express and HOV lanes, have proven successful in Houston, building ever-larger freeways is not a durable solution for either financial or sustainability reasons. Innovative solutions, such as those proposed for I-45, offer the chance to envision a new future for Houston's mobility network.

The entire plan is impressive. But the downtown portion of the plan—which consists of removing the Pierce Elevated from I-10 to U.S. 59/I-69 and rerouting I-45 to run parallel to first I-10 and then U.S. 59/I-69—is easily among the most ambitious and innovative aspects of any TxDOT proposal to date.

If completed as currently sketched out, the changes downtown would not only substantially improve traffic congestion, they would remake central Houston's built environment.

Removing the Pierce Elevated eliminates an unsightly boundary between downtown and midtown. Capping options would create massive new greenspaces north of I-10 at North Main and east of the George R. Brown Convention Center. Much like Kyle



Warren Park in Dallas or the Rose F. Kennedy Greenway in Boston, these areas would offer room for a variety of innovative amenities.

The downtown greenspace would build upon the civic energy created by Discovery Green, BBVA Stadium, and the Toyota Center, and connect the East End with downtown. They would also mesh aesthetically with the proposed land bridges for Memorial Park. By building these spaces, the city could create an entire system of over-highway parks and recapture prime spaces now given solely to cars.

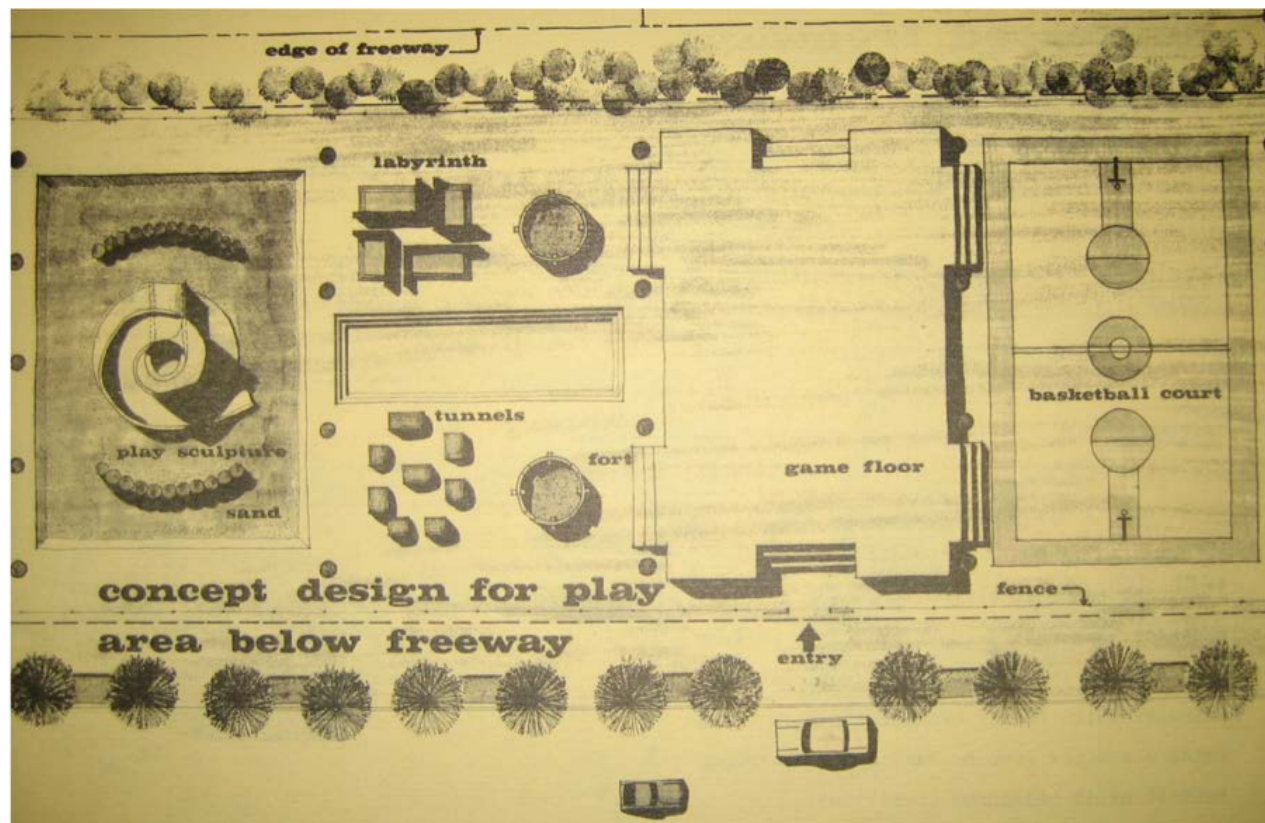
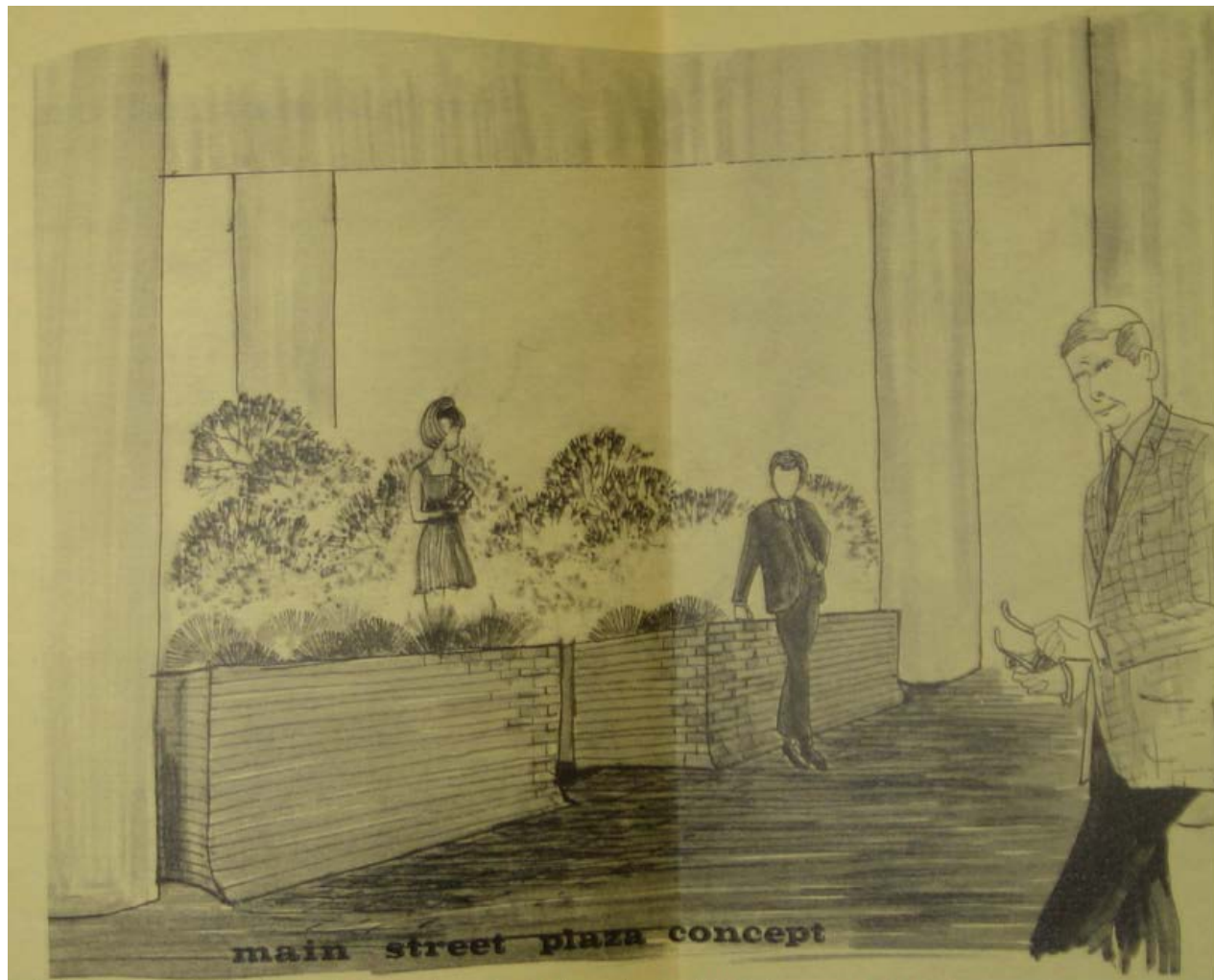
### The historical vision for roadways

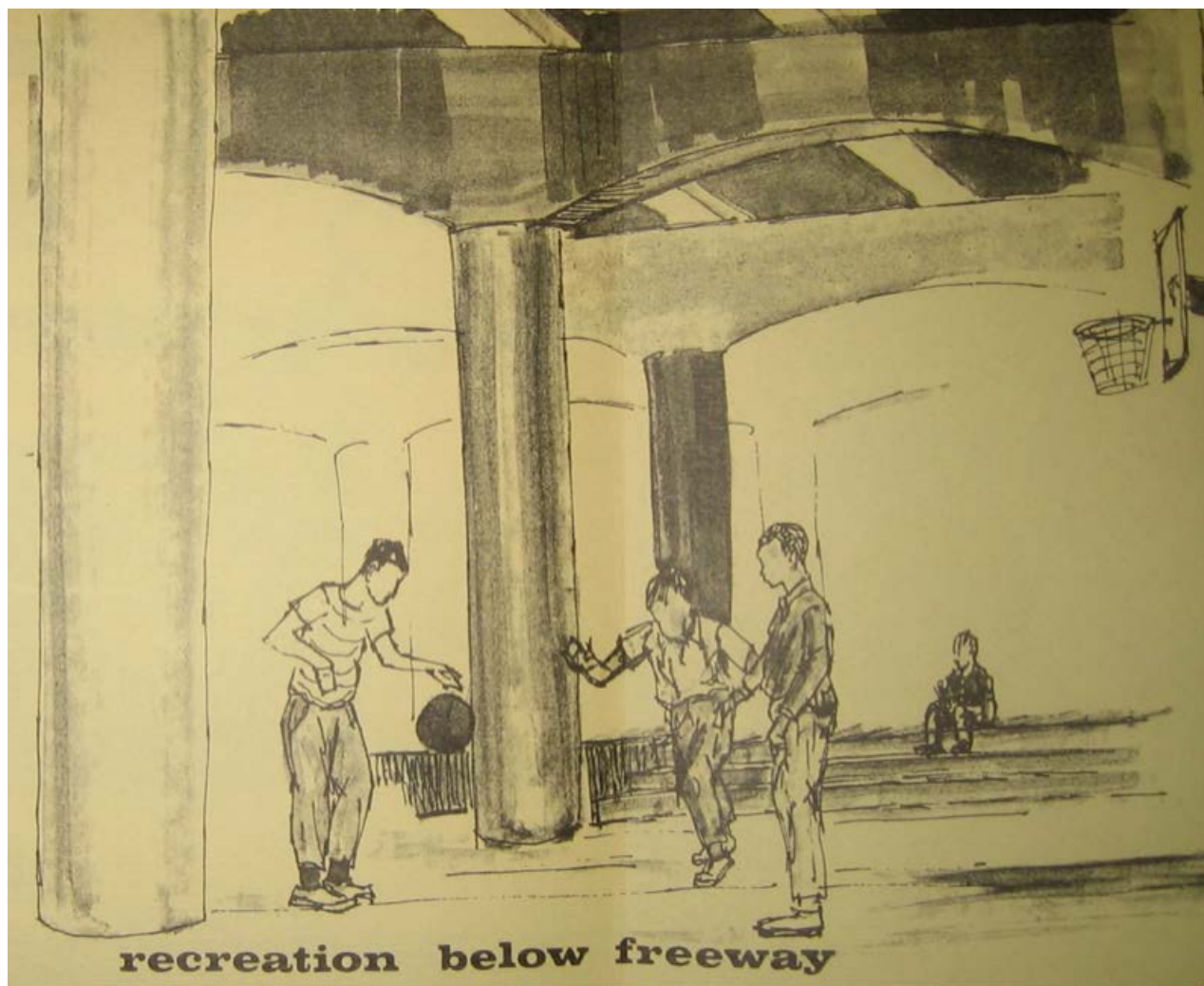
While the vision offered by TxDOT is certainly new, Houstonians themselves have been imagining how the city's highways might better serve the daily life of the city for decades.

In fact, the Pierce Elevated has been at the center of those imaginings since its conception in the 1950s and construction in the 1960s. During the planning stage for the roadway, city leaders hoped the Pierce would frame the city's booming growth by offering views of the burgeoning skyline. On opening day of the roadway, leaders happily trumpeted the "magnificent view of the business district," that the road gave. With its elevated position, they claimed, the driving experience was "almost like going up in a cable car."

But others saw in its hulking presence an injury to a city on the rise. In a Texas Architect article from 1966, critic Patrick Horsburgh called the space beneath the elevated "psychologically intolerable" and doubted that any real form of urban life could occur beneath it.

In response to Horsburgh and complaints from nearby residents and businesses about the drabness of the overhead roadway, the city tasked the Houston Arts Commission with envisioning other possibilities for the space beneath the Pierce. After studying the 1.3 mile long, half-block wide area, the commission concluded that the space was ideal for "playgrounds, plazas, and parking" and included a number of illustrations depicting children playing basketball and office workers enjoying a break beneath six lanes of traffic.





Images from Houston Municipal Art Commission; City of Houston Department of Planning, "Beautification Study: Freeways," 1968, Box 5, City of Houston Planning Department Collection, RG A 004, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

While the artist's renderings made playing basketball and eating lunch underneath a highway seem possible, if not downright enjoyable, only the parking element of their vision came to pass. For the last 40 years parking has been the only major use of the spaces beneath the downtown highway.

The idea of tearing down the elevated, though, has already motivated several new ideas about what to do with the decommissioned roadway. Several groups have begun campaigns to turn it into Houston's version of the famed High Line in New York City. These advocates offer some compelling rationales. An elevated park would continue Houston's push to create more publically accessible recreational spaces and would certainly add character to downtown's built environment.

## Houston needs more than just green spaces

But might maintaining the entirety of the elevated structure and repurposing it as park limit the potential for other possibilities?

What if we used the existing superstructure from Buffalo Bayou to Bagby Street to make an elevated park? This could connect two green jewels—the bayou park with Houston’s first complete green street. It could carry pedestrians from the bayou path to midtown, give sweeping views of the skyline and bayou system, and keep foot traffic away from the “parkways” offered by the current TxDOT plan.

Using only a segment of the Pierce for an elevated park would leave nearly four-fifth of a mile of land to develop in other ways. If coupled with the purchase of other parcels, public and private developers might remake the whole length of the current route.

This could include public spaces such as ground level linear parks, public squares (without a highway overhead), and other mixed-use developments. Such options could take advantage of proximity to the Red Line light rail and continue Midtown Houston’s transit-oriented redevelopment. State-owned land could be used to build much-needed affordable housing in close proximity to downtown. And all this work would directly reconnect downtown and midtown by removing the physical barrier of the Pierce.

We have a long time to discuss options. The final choice on the overall highway plan and the Pierce Elevated decision are years off. But the chance to have conversations about what we as Houstonians want out of the system and its individual pieces presents us with an exciting opportunity. We at the Kinder Institute are looking forward to participating in those discussions. Let’s all keep on imagining what our new mobility system and our city might look like in the decades to come.

---

<sup>1</sup>“A New, Beautiful Freeway Link,” Houston Chronicle, August 22, 1967, H-Freeways-1950s Vertical File, Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC).



<sup>2</sup>Patrick Horsbrugh, "Blight, A Foretold Affliction," Texas Architect, May 1966, Folder 3, Box 29, George Fuermann Collection, Special Collections Library of the University of Houston, 7-8.

<sup>3</sup>Houston Municipal Art Commission; City of Houston Department of Planning, "Beautification Study: Freeways," 1968, Box 5, City of Houston Planning Department Collection, RG A 004, HMRC.

Kinder Institute for Urban Research

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# TxDOT Floats Ideas for Rerouting I-45 Through Downtown Houston


## TxDOT Floats Ideas for Rerouting I-45 Through Downtown Houston

Posted on: [May 4 2015](#) by [Michael Hagerty](#) in [Segment B](#), [Segments](#) with [0 Comments](#)






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Houston Matters

TxDOT Floats Ideas for Rerouting I-45 Through D...



SOUNDCLOUD



► 27

The Texas Department of Transportation last week [unveiled some potential options](#) to address traffic congestion along Interstate 45 through downtown Houston, in order to gauge public opinion.

Among the potential changes under consideration: rerouting I-45 to the eastern side of downtown, where US 59 runs today. Another idea floated: [tearing down the Pierce Elevated and turning the area into green space](#).

News 88.7 FM transportation reporter [Gail Delaughter](#) attended a TxDOT information session last week, and she joins us to share some of what she saw and heard.

MORE: [I-45 Proposal](#)

[Low Oil Prices on Minds as Offshore Technology Conference Begins](#)

[What Will the New Memorial Park Look Like, Now that a Master Plan Has Been Approved?](#)

Tags: [Gail Delaughter](#), [highways](#), [news 88.7](#), [Pierce Elevated](#), [Texas Department of Transportation](#), [traffic](#), [transportation](#), [TXDOT](#) Categories: [Segment B](#), [Segments](#)



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## Houston's Urban Interstate Debate: Transform, or Tear Down?

Some locals want their own High Line; others want a fresh start.

ERIC JAFFE |   | May 7, 2015 |  7 Comments

Like [so many American cities](#) in the 1960s, Houston built a raised interstate right through its core—a segment of Interstate 45 known as the Pierce Elevated. Despite objections that life around the Pierce Elevated would become "psychologically intolerable," officials advanced the plans anyway. They even argued the area beneath the highway would be a pleasant place to, say, play basketball.



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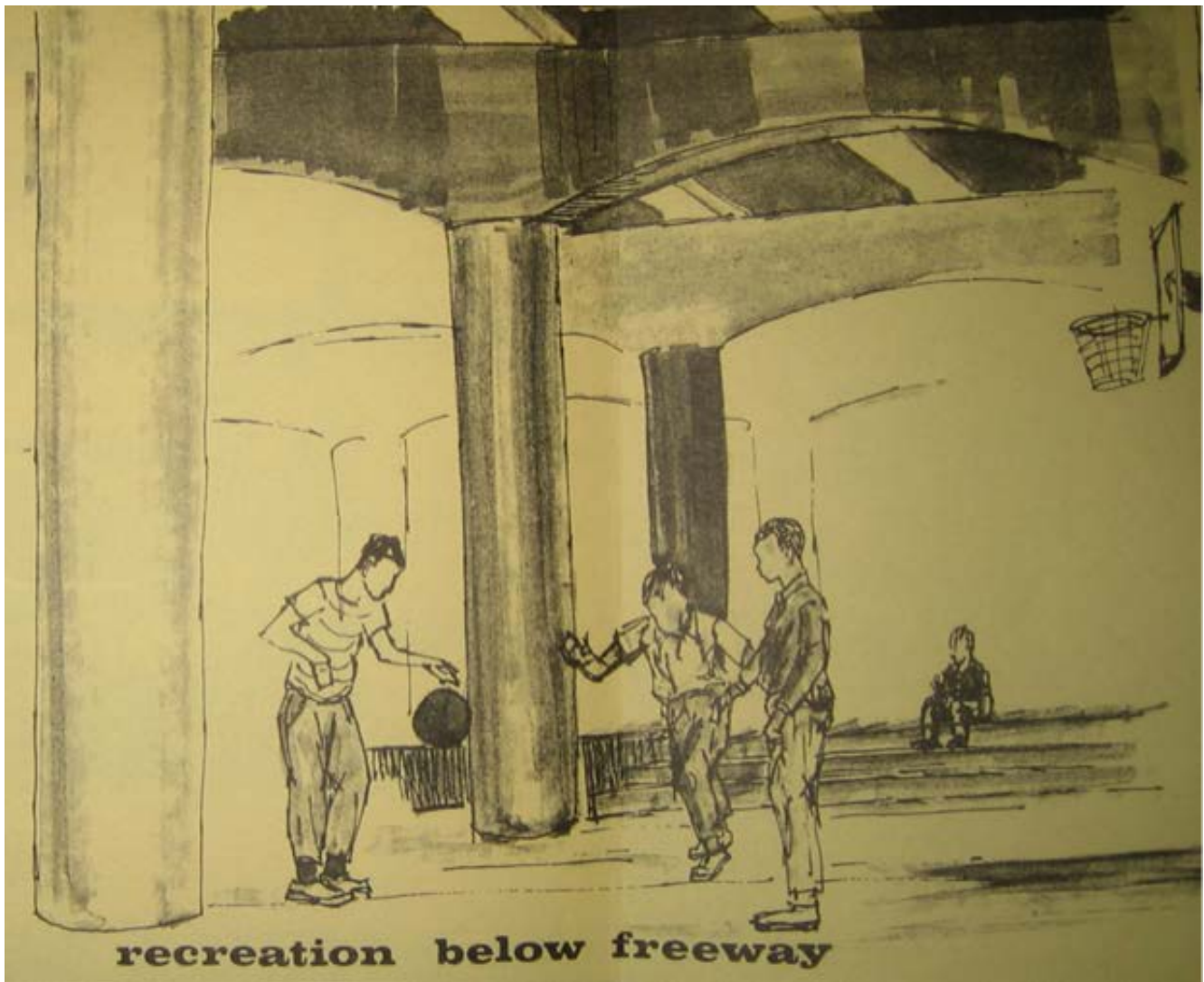
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Via [The Urban Edge](#)

Shocker: no one played basketball under I-45. "I see that as a public relations attempt to say, 'No, really, honestly, it's not that bad!'" says Kyle Shelton of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, [who's documented this particular era](#). Instead, like so many other urban freeways, the Pierce Elevated divided the city, mangled the street grid, and served as a barrier to local development.

But there's hope yet for Houston. In conjunction with the Texas Department of Transportation, the city is advancing plans for what the *Chronicle* [says](#) "could be the largest freeway rebuilding project ever undertaken in the Houston area"—[an effort](#) that targets the Pierce Elevated for closure. So just as so many cities built urban interstates, Houston might join those [finally removing](#) them.

The hot question around town right now is what to put in Pierce's place. Some

favor the [latest official proposal](#), which recommends tearing down the highway and "enhancing the visual sight line of the Midtown and Downtown areas." But others prefer to keep the structure in place, close it to traffic, and convert it into an elevated park that becomes Houston's answer to the High Line in New York.

Any plans for Pierce are still many years (and [rounds of public feedback](#)) away from being realized. But given the broad interest in closing the highway, and the time it takes to piece together support for big public space projects, it's not too soon to start looking at the transform-versus-teardown debate more closely.



TxDOT

## Transform

The pro-transform folks certainly have pretty design renderings on their side.

They also have the *Chronicle's* Lisa Gray, who's been writing a lot about [potential park transformations](#) and seems to favor them. Gray, like other locals, [is partial](#) to the views of the city that the raised road provides:

Houston's downtown has always looked best from the freeway, and the Pierce's elevation feels exhilarating in mathematically flat Houston. What would it be like to savor those views slowly, without fear of collision?

One of the leading ideas for transforming the interstate is called the [Pierce Skypark](#). The idea here is for a 2-mile, 38-acre elevated park in the style of the High Line. Gray [also likes](#) what a Skypark could do for the space underneath the interstate: "that shaded area could become a pedestrian- and bike-friendly landscape of apartments, shops, offices, restaurants and other attractions — a pleasant urban place to live or while away an afternoon."

Perhaps there could even be basketball courts.





Another idea in the transform camp is called the [Pierce Elevated Park](#). This vision fashions itself a more "recreation-oriented" use of the superstructure. It would include a 2.6-mile walking and jogging path, bike and rollerblade strips, designated exercise areas designed for yoga and "fitness boot camps," a skateboard park, and connections to the Buffalo Bayou trail system. The Pierce Elevated Park also touts its lower cost of construction, compared with the Skypark.



[Pierce Elevated Park](#)

## Tear Down

In response to Gray's posts on elevated parks, John S. Jacob of Houston's Eastwood Civic Association counters that Pierce should be torn down to make way for "a pedestrian promenade" on par with the Champs-Élysées in Paris or La Rambla in Barcelona. He envisions a place with pedestrian plazas, outdoors markets, civic spaces, lots of big trees, and yes, even a little room for cars—but most importantly a reconnection between midtown and downtown Houston. [He retorts:](#)



Clearly we need to do something innovative and lasting with this new space. Turning it into just another street would be a total waste. But we must undo the bad that was done by the Pierce Elevated: the destruction of vital urban fabric for traffic efficiency. We need a bigger idea for that. We must reclaim this space in ways that increase usable and lively civic space by building exceptional urban fabric.

At the Kinder Institute's blog, Shelton wonders if there might be [some middle ground](#) between transform and teardown. He proposes turning a short segment of the elevated structure into a high park but razing the rest of it for other types of development, such as public squares and mixed-use buildings. Given the area's proximity to [Houston's growing light rail system](#), and the fact that the state already owns much of the land, Shelton sees the neighborhood as ripe for transit-oriented, affordable housing. Plus that way, Houston could keep some of those great views but still remove a physical barrier that's harmed the city for decades.

"Cities like Houston—despite its reputation, and really the reality, that it's a pretty spread-out city—there's a lot of stuff happening in the center," Shelton tells CityLab. "If you can potentially be innovative and think about how you re-route and move some space through downtown, you might substantially remake what's been in place since the 1960s."


## About the Author



Eric Jaffe is a senior associate editor at CityLab. He writes about transportation as well as behavior, crime, and history, and has a general interest in the science of city life. He's the author of *A Curious Madness* (2014) and *The King's Best Highway* (2010), and lives in New York.

ALL POSTS |  

Approximate location of additional right of way and park, Downtown and EaDo. Photo: Alex Maclean.

 May. 30, 2015 3:43 PM

## Ten Major Changes in the Plans to Expand I-45 You Might Not Know About

Also known as [I45NorthAndMore.com](http://I45NorthAndMore.com), the North Houston Highway Improvement Project has made headlines not only because of the potential removal of the Pierce Elevated, but also of the possibility of turning it instead into a [Sky Park](#).

There's nothing quite so fetching in urban design these days as a Sky Park, but if you look beyond that glittery, and unlikely, dangling object, there's a whole lot more to the proposal. Namely:

### 1. I-45 Would Rival I-10 in Width

Approximate location of proposed additional right of way south of Crosstimbers.

The plan would dramatically widen I-45 to more than 30 lanes in certain sections. North of 610, I-45 would rival the Katy Freeway in its expanse. Though the west side of I-45 at Crosstimbers is largely vacant, TxDOT plans to take major right of way east of I-45 where many businesses thrive, including the Culinary Institute. The greater capacity to move automobiles might be accompanied by increased [cancer risk](#) and [asthma](#) for Houstonians generally, and for those living close to the path in particular.

### 2. I-69 Would Be Sunken through Midtown and Museum District

Proposed sinking of I-69 through Midtown/Museum District/Greater Third Ward. Image: TxDOT.

All of I-69 from Shepherd to Commerce Street would be sunk as deep as 20 feet below grade. That is to say, all the above-ground sections in Midtown and the Museum District (Greater Third Ward) would be sunken and widened, radically transforming the landscape in these neighborhoods. As Tory Gattis notes, the plans would eliminate the [bottleneck at Spur 527](#).

### 3. TxDOT Would Demolish Apartments, Public Housing, and Homeless Services in EaDo

Rendering of SEARCH building: Studio Red Architects.

Lofts at the Ballpark, Clayton Homes (public housing), and the SEARCH building (a 27,000-square-foot facility for services to the homeless that is [just now breaking ground](#)) are in the path of the widened I-45/I-69 freeway east of Downtown, and will be torn down at the expense of taxpayers.

### 4. James Bute Park Might Have a New Life

Realignment of highways near Bute Park. Image: TxDOT.

Straightening I-69 might yield a [Bute Park](#) that is less isolated from surrounding Downtown sites. TxDOT could use the site for required flood control, which would open a range of opportunities to layer uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat. A controversial plan to use the site for public housing was [recently nixed](#).

### 5. University of Houston-Downtown Campus Reconnected

Combined highway alignments would be moved to edge of University of Houston-Downtown campus. Image: TxDOT.

With I-10 moved to the freight rail line north of campus, the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) would see dramatic change. Currently, I-10 bifurcates the campus. Presumably, the land swap will benefit UHD by creating a unified campus.

#### 6. New Slimmed-Down Bridges for Cars to Cross Buffalo Bayou

Replacement of I-45 over Buffalo Bayou with “connectors.” Image: TxDOT.

The section of the “Pierce Elevated” over Buffalo Bayou would be rebuilt with new Downtown connectors that TxDOT alternately describes as “parkways” and “spurs.” Though the official rendering is dull, the public-private partnerships that have rebuilt the parks along the bayous might help bring about new iconic bridges for cars. A Sky Park in this location is unlikely because moving traffic across the bayou is considered a major priority for many stakeholders.

#### 7. Decommissioning of Pierce Elevated Would Come Last

Location of Pierce Elevated section that would be decommissioned. Image: TxDOT.

The decommissioning of the Pierce Street section of the “Pierce Elevated” will be the last piece in the entire puzzle. The rerouting and rebuilding of I-45 along I-10 and I-69 has to take place first. It is unlikely that the demolition or creation of Sky Park would take place until well after 2020. The Houston Chronicle has published pieces [favorable](#) to and [discouraging](#) of proposals for a Sky Park. The Kinder Institute published a wonderful [history](#) of the highway by Kyle Shelton with vintage drawings. Eric Jaffe of [CityLab](#) weighed in as well.

#### 8. Funding for the Project Is in Question

This project is unfunded. Every year, Texas has \$1 billion in funding for highways. This project alone would cost in the range of \$6 billion and would take years to be completed in a piecemeal fashion. The record of decision might happen next year. Then acquisition of land could begin. It would be shovel ready in 2019 at the soonest. Additionally, consider that [the entire highway system is underfunded](#).

#### 9. Bridges North of Downtown Rebuilt with Possible Park Capping Sunken Freeway

Potential park capping freeway near N. Main. Image: TxDOT.

Bridges inside 610 to Downtown would be torn down including North Main, Cottage, and North streets. TxDOT could rebuild them with protected paths for pedestrians and cyclists, pedestrian-friendly lighting, and designs similar to the “red ball” bridges over 59.

#### 10. Impact on Traffic Congestion is Unknown and Might Mirror That of I-10 Widening

I-10 Katy Freeway. Photo: Alex MacLean.

The I-45 project includes regular lanes and two managed lanes in each direction north of Downtown. If the impact of this project mirrors that of I-10, the addition of regular lanes will not reduce congestion and travel times. Increased capacity generally encourages or accommodates more car-dependent development and more cars on the road — a phenomenon known as induced demand. METRO would keep the managed lanes free of traffic congestion for commuter buses and high-occupancy vehicles by charging high tolls for single-occupant vehicles. The tolls for I-10 were recently [raised to \\$10](#), among the highest in the nation. In addition, autonomous cars and buses are [expected](#)

[to be on the road](#) by the time this project is completed. The design does not take the impact of those emerging technologies into consideration.

The period for [public comment](#) has been extended to May 31, and the Architecture Center Houston is holding a [public meeting](#) on the project June 10.

## 5 Comments

1. Carla Cheshire writes:

[05.31.15](#)

[9:38 pm](#)

1

More widening, more concrete. Haven't you people learned that larger roads to the suburbs don't work. They fill up and never are adequate. Houston traffic will be paralyzed in the near future. Must go with mass transit, rail, tram whatever. The one person in one car days are numbered. Think ahead! It is not a sustainable practice.

2. Jay Marrs writes:

[06.01.15](#)

[11:01 am](#)

2

The real solution is to add 2 lanes each way above the others that will be only for transiting Houston, with the only off ramps to 45, 10 and 59/69. Allows for traffic to cross the city without all the congestion, then also add 2 lanes each way for fast rail inside (the present HOV lanes) main lanes. Then run rail in all directions from the center of town. Going underground is totally stupid and a waste of taxpayer money, but it does keep the engineers and legislators paid and campaign pockets full). Go vertical and cut costs, safer regarding flooding, and easier to maintain. Also, Quit the toll crap. Charge a tax for all vehicles that reside inside the city limits and an annual transit tax for all commuters. EZ tag everywhere, streets, exits, etc., which will monitor the activity of the tags so that they pay the commuter fees.

3. Rachel writes:

[06.01.15](#)

[12:56 pm](#)

3

What happens to Little White Oak Bayou as it meanders back and forth beneath I-45 from just north of 610 to I-10? Reminds me of the bear song: "Can't go under it, can't go over it, can't go around it, can't go through it, have to go...."



4. [Ten Major Changes in the Plans to Expand I-45 Y...](#) writes:

[06.01.15](#)

[12:56 pm](#)

4

[...] Approximate location of additional right of way and park, Downtown and EaDo. Photo: Alex Maclean.

[...]

5. [Today's Headlines | Streetsblog Texas](#) writes:

[06.02.15](#)

[9:47 am](#)

5

[...] Texas Is Building Tons of Urbanism. Texas Is Building Tons of Sprawl. Sometimes Both. [...]



BREAKING NEWS WATCH LIVE: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to sign border security bill

## TRAFFIC

# PLANS FOR MAJOR FACELIFT OF I-45 NEAR DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

Funding for the I-45 project hasn't been approved yet so it could still be years before TxDOT breaks ground

Share



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By Katherine Whaley

Tuesday, June 02, 2015 07:05PM

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- TxDOT recently released its proposed plan for the largest freeway construction project Houston has seen in years.

Get ready for a major I-45 facelift -- from the addition of four managed lanes, to lifted feeder road lanes, even urban green space. The plan will help bring drivers in the suburbs into the city faster.

"We will see more and more suburban areas become more urbanized," said Dr. Kyle Shelton with Rice University.

Dr. Shelton from Rice University's Kinder Institute says these changes could accelerate development in suburban areas and influence traffic patterns in our city for decades but not only that, TxDOT's plan will also be a throwback to the past.

"Twenty years from now, the downtown buildings would obviously look a lot different, but the grid itself if this project is implemented as it's planned would look really similar to what we had in 1962," Dr. Shelton said.

That's because the new design would remove a familiar freeway landmark.

TxDOT's plan would get rid of the Pierce Elevated, and replace it with a ground-level parkway that would take you straight into downtown.

"The original gulf freeway when it came into town before the pierce was there actually fed into the local streets in a very similar way that the new 45 would," said Dr. Shelton.

Dr. Shelton and TxDOT believe the Pierce Elevated acts as a barrier and removing it will help traffic and even pedestrian flow between midtown and downtown and help connect drivers from outlying areas faster, a change that he believes will benefit everyone.

"But I think that the more Houstonians and the people in the Houston region can think about the highway at their front door being connected to the light rail here and moving everyone, then the more successful we will be at creating a mobility system that works for everybody," said Dr. Shelton.

Now, funding has not yet been approved on this project so it could still be 5 to 10 years before TxDOT even breaks ground.

#### Related Topics:

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## **Social Media**



## Gail Delaughter Twitter Postings

April 22, 2015 - May 4, 2015



**Gail Delaughter** @Gail\_HPM · Apr 22

Big plans for @TxDOT re-do of I-45 North Freeway, we could be saying goodbye to the Pierce Elevated  
[houstonpublicmedia.org/news/txdot-pub...](http://houstonpublicmedia.org/news/txdot-pub...) @HPMNews887



**Gail Delaughter** @Gail\_HPM · Apr 28

2nd of 3 @TxDOT public meetings on proposed improvements to I-45.  
@HPMNews887





Gail Delaughter @Gail\_HPM · Apr 28



Citizens view @TxDOT plans for I-45 at public meeting. Proposal includes tearing down Pierce Elevated. @HPMNews887



1



Gail Delaughter @Gail\_HPM · Apr 28



Danny Perez @TxDOTHoustonPIO talks with Downtown District's Bob Eury on @HouMediaSource concerning I-45. @HPMNews887



1



**Gail Delaughter** @Gail\_HPM · Apr 29



Houston @TxDOT Shares Plans to Remake I-45, Tear Down Pierce  
Elevated [houstonpublicmedia.org/news/houstonia...](https://houstonpublicmedia.org/news/houstonia...) @HPMNews887  
#hounews



**Gail Delaughter** @Gail\_HPM · May 1

Hold on tight! TxDOT I-45 Redo Renderings  
Now Available in Video Format  
[swamplot.com/wacky-txdot-i-...](https://swamplot.com/wacky-txdot-i-...)







Gail Delaughter @Gail\_HPM · 3h



Hmmm, what's all this? Talking @TxDOT I-45 reroute plan today on @HoustonMatters at noon on @HPMNews887



4



1





## Dug Begley Twitter Postings

April 22, 2015 - April 30, 2015



Dug Begley @DugBegley · Apr 22

Pierce Elevated getting the boot in plan to remake I-45. [chron.com/news/transport...](http://chron.com/news/transport...)  
Freeway also gets depressed in spots.



← ↻ 3 ★ 2 + 👤 ...



Dug Begley retweeted



Matt Schwartz @SchwartzChron · Apr 23

Some day, we will tell our grandchildren of the Pierce Elevated, hoping to reconnect them to their culture  
[houstonchronicle.com/news/transport...](http://houstonchronicle.com/news/transport...) #hounews

← ↻ 2 ★ 3 + 👤 ...

[View summary](#)



Dug Begley @DugBegley · Apr 23

I-45 project would remove Pierce Elevated, add lanes and possibly green space in spots. [houstonchronicle.com/news/transport](https://houstonchronicle.com/news/transport)



← ↻ 8 ★ 3 + 👤 ...



Dug Begley @DugBegley · Apr 28

Meeting to discuss big changes planned for I-45 moves to Midtown Tuesday  
[blog.chron.com/thehighwayman/...](https://blog.chron.com/thehighwayman/)



← ↻ 2 ★ + 👤 ...





**Dug Begley** @DugBegley · Apr 30

Last meeting to discuss I-45 redesign tonight, but it's far from the last word on the design. [wp.me/p3rXUE-1pG](https://wp.me/p3rXUE-1pG)



1



## Houston Matters Twitter Post

April 23, 2015



Gail Delaughter retweeted



**Houston Matters** @HoustonMatters · 19m

"Pierce Elevated was something that was built for another day and time"  
says @Gail\_HPM on potential changes to I-45 #transportation #HouNews



1



1





AIA Friday: The latest news from AIA Houston.

[View this email in your browser.](#)



### Demystifying Fellowship Seminar

Wed, May 20, 4 p.m. This seminar is a must if you've been nominated for fellowship, but it is also great for those that might be interested in fellowship down the road and as a primer on putting together a compelling portfolio. RSVP to [Jermaine](#).

### Connect Dinner

All AIAH Fellows and architect members within their first ten years of practice are invited to this annual dinner honoring the newest members of the College of Fellows from our chapter. Wed, May 20, 6 p.m. at the newly renovated Houston Club atop the Shell One building. \$50 for fellows, \$25 for young architects. Contact [Jermaine](#) to RSVP.

### Tours

The last tour of the season is the [Buffalo Bayou Walking Tour](#), Sat, May 16, 10-noon. All tours offer 2 CEUs. Tours will resume in Sep.

### Full Day CE

Tue, May 19, 8:30-3:30, 6 CEUs, register [here](#). Parking, breakfast and lunch are included with your registration.

### BEC Event

Tue, May 19, 5:30 p.m., Victoria Ranieri will present [Consolidating Control Layer Design](#). 1 HSW.

### Exhibit Opening

[The Artwork of Tom Colbert](#), AIA, will open Thu, May 21, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

### Richard Payne Architectural Photography Workshop

May 22-24, 16 CEUs. Richard Payne, FAIA, is one of the most experienced and successful architectural photographers in the United States. The workshop will utilize digital techniques and technology that will enable workshop participants to produce professional quality photographs with the use of "consumer" cameras and computers commonly owned by the non-professional photographer. More information and registration [here](#).

### Updates to the Harris County Building Code CE

### CE Programs

Sat, May 16  
[Buffalo Bayou Walking Tour](#)  
10-noon  
2 CEUs

Tue, May 19  
[Full Day CE](#)  
8:30-3:30  
6 CEUs

Tue, May 19  
[BEC Event](#)  
5:30-7:00 p.m.  
1 HSW

Fri – Sun, May 22-24  
[Richard Payne Photography Workshop](#)  
16 CEUs

### Committee Meetings

Mon, May 18  
ArCH Tours Committee  
Noon

Wed, May 20  
Committee on Architecture for Health  
Noon

Thu, May 21  
ArCH Steering Committee  
12:30

### Members In The News

See recent [announcements](#) about AIA Houston members.

Tue, May 26, 9-11 a.m., 2 HSW. Presented by Warren Bonisch. [More info.](#)

#### Presentation by Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett

Tue, May 26, 6:30 p.m., Chase Tower. In 2007, fueled by his own 42 pound weight loss, Mayor Cornett put Oklahoma City on a diet to help change the culture of obesity in the city. His commitment to improving the health of his community led to the investment of nearly \$2 billion in schools and quality-of-life infrastructure through the innovative MAPS program. That investment generated nearly \$6 billion in private sector investment. Today, Oklahoma City's economy is one of the nation's most robust and the downtown has witnessed a revival in walkability. Presented by the Kinder Institute, this program is free and open to the public.

#### Sandcastle T-Shirt Distribution Party

Wed, May 27, 5-7 p.m. at McCoy/Steelcase, 6869 Old Katy Rd. Come to the party to pick up your t-shirts and beach packets and stay for the food, drinks and raffle prizes.

#### AIA Sandcastle Happy Hour sponsored by Wilsonart

Fri, May 29, 6-10 p.m. at the Doubletree Hotel in Galveston, Seawall & 18th St.

#### Residential Committee Site Tour

Wed, May 27, noon at 5599 Doliver Dr, 77056. Join the AIAH Residential Committee on a tour of a home designed by Imad Abdullah, AIA for his own family. Lunch will be provided.

#### Art by Architects – Call for Entries

Later this year, ArCH will host our recurring Art by Architects Exhibition. Click [here](#) for submittal information. Deadline to submit images of your work is Fri, May 29.

#### USGBC/ AIAH COTE Building Tour

Thu, May 21, 5:30-8:30pm, tour the new Studio RED designed Metronational Treehouse which was recently recognized as the highest rated LEED Platinum core and shell building in Texas. More info and registration [here](#).

#### 2015 Expanded Environment Awards - Monster

The Expanded Environment wants your multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, impure, unholy design proposals. Show us your ideas about how extreme combinations of architectural form, material, and programs can reshape not only our built worlds but the way we think of them. Submittal deadline is May 29. More information [here](#).

#### Help Shape Houston's Future

TxDOT has announced plans to reroute freeway traffic around downtown and close the Pierce Elevated. They are accepting public comments through May 31. Let them know what you think they should do with the Pierce Elevated once it's closed to motor traffic. How can this infrastructure and its real estate be used to best advance Houston's future as a world-class city? To share your thoughts with TxDOT, click [here](#).

#### We are Looking for New Space

The lease runs out on our current space in Bayou Place at the end of March 2017. We are working with a broker in a search for a new space and are considering buying land to build on, buying a building to renovate or finding new lease space. We've [prepared a flier](#) that outlines our needs. Please forward it to anyone you think might know of a suitable property.

#### **Name That Building**

Edmund Wong, EDI International, was the first to identify last week's building as the [TWA Flight Center](#) at JFK Airport (Eero Saarinen, 1962). First one to identify the building and architect above will win a free 2-hour CE seminar of your choice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rusty'.

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