

May 13, 2015

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An open letter to our fellow Houston Area Citizens:

The Houston economy is so strong that we have created more jobs than any other city in Texas, and the Texas economy is so strong that more jobs have been created here than in any other State in the Union. Our success is a great blessing and a testament to our devotion to the core principles that have made America so successful – hard work, self-reliance and thrift. Our success also inspires over 3,000 people a month to move into the Greater Houston area. As we continue to grow, it becomes increasingly important that we find ways to improve mobility.

Today, we have both signed and are sending out this joint letter to announce our mutual commitment to work together to relieve traffic congestion so Houston Area citizens can spend more time with their families and on the job. We have identified several areas we can work on right away that will help reduce traffic congestion, and we want this agreement to set the tone for our future cooperation.

First, Congressman Culberson supports METRO's proposed legislation pending in the State Legislature that expands the size of the METRO Board, increases the eligible length of Board member service and allows the existing board to elect a chairman in October with an odd initial term. These changes will help ensure better regional cooperation in designing and building successful transportation projects while smoothing the transition from the current board size to the larger board size that current law will require in the near future.

Second, Congressman Culberson will begin work right away to change federal law so that METRO can use all of the federal dollars not yet drawn down from the \$900 million in previously approved federal transit grants for corridor specific transit projects, particularly the new North and Southeast rail lines as well as the 90A commuter rail line. These proposed changes will be consistent with the goals of the FTA in order to allow METRO to match these funds with credits from the original Main Street Line or other Transportation Development Credits so that local funds will be freed up for new projects to improve mobility in the Houston area.

Third, Congressman Culberson will begin work right away to change federal law so that METRO can count \$587 Million in local funds spent on the East End Rail Line as the local matching credit for a commuter rail line along 90A, and secondarily for any non-rail capital project, or any other project included in the 2003 Referendum. Rail on Richmond Avenue west of Shepherd Drive or Post Oak Boulevard would only be eligible to utilize these credits once approved in a subsequent referendum.

Fourth, Congressman Culberson will begin work right away to help secure up to \$100 million in federal funds for three consecutive years for bus purchases, park and ride expansion and HOV lane improvements. These funds will also facilitate METRO's expanded use of the 2012 referendum increment to pay down debt. All of these efforts will enhance and improve the bus system that is already one of the best in the nation.

Fifth, METRO wants to eliminate confusion for property and business owners on Richmond Avenue west of Shepherd Drive and on Post Oak Boulevard. Therefore, the METRO Board will adopt a resolution pledging not to use any federal or state funds to build rail on Richmond Avenue west of Shepherd Drive or on Post Oak Boulevard north of Richmond unless METRO service area voters approve it as part of a future METRO service area referendum. Likewise, no local funds can be spent on such a rail project without a referendum except expenditures of local funds necessary for the proper studies and engineering to present to the voters in the required referendum. Any such referendum will be part of a multi-modal transportation plan including reasonable cost estimates and a description of the project's pathway and end points, realizing that pathways could undergo minor adjustments as a result of unforeseen environmental problems.

Sixth, Congressman Culberson will begin work right away to memorialize this agreement in both federal and state law. Thus, METRO does not oppose Congressman Culberson's language amending Section 164 of the FY16 THUD appropriations bill to memorialize this agreement. And, Metro does not oppose his efforts to memorialize this agreement in state law.

Seventh, if METRO service area voters approve the referendum, Congressman Culberson pledges to support the will of the voters and he will work to secure the maximum level of federal funding available for the transit projects described in the referendum.

We expect that this will be the first of many future examples of our commitment to find common ground and to work together to find transportation solutions that will give Houstonians more free time to spend with their families and on the job. As Houstonians have more free time to pursue happiness and prosperity, the Houston economy will grow even more than it has.

Sincerely,



Gilbert Andrew Garcia, CFA
METRO Board Chairman



John Culberson
Member of Congress, Texas

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, Texas

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