

NHA Members Briefed on Grand Parkway's Future

After nine months of research and work between the North Houston Association (NHA) and several transportation agencies, the association presented a factual document on the current status of the Grand Parkway to its membership.

The document was distributed at NHA's quarterly membership luncheon on July 8. Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Houston District Engineer, Gary Trietsch, Wesley Freise, executive director, Harris County Toll Road Authority, and Diane Schenke, executive director, Grand Parkway Association, spoke at the event.

A resolution allowing negotiations to take place regarding the parkway is currently awaiting approval by TxDOT, according to Schenke.

"Nobody knows how long it will take to reach an agreement. Our goal is within the next six months," said Trietsch.

According to Schenke, the Grand Parkway Association's board of directors has already approved the resolution, as has Harris County's Commissioners Court.

Freise identified three issues that are possible barriers to the parkway's completion: funding, right-of-way acquisition and environmental constraints. He noted that the most difficult issue at this time is funding.

The North Houston Association formed the Grand Parkway Committee following a request from Congressman Brady that the organization revisit the issue and investigate the possibility of the northern segments being completed.

"I would like to thank you for your



Diane Schenke, Grand Parkway Association, Gary Trietsch, Texas Department of Transportation, and Wesley Freise, Harris County Toll Road Authority, take part in lighthearted conversation before addressing NHA's membership at a luncheon focused on the Grand Parkway.

hard work and contributions to the completion of the Grand Parkway," said U.S. Representative Kevin Brady in a letter to the Association. "The North Houston Association...continues to be instrumental in moving the parkway from idea to reality."

The purpose of the Grand Parkway Committee is to gain a better understanding of the constraining factors for implementing the Grand Parkway and to assist in educating the public on the need to support expanded infrastructure in north Houston.

Committee cochairmen are Glenn Graham, Espey, Huston & Associates, and David Millikan, HNTB Corporation.

The committee's first step in reaching its goal was to meet with a number of transportation agencies and other appropriate specialists to gather information on the Grand Parkway.

The Association then documented the factual information gleaned from

these meetings to create a publication that includes project history, creation of the Grand Parkway Association, current alignment of the parkway, funding possibilities, environmental constraints, legislation and current status of the northern segments (F, G and H).

The committee believes this development is essential in order to accomplish
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From the President...

Dear NHA Members:

These lazy days of summer - not at the NHA offices! We've had such activity in all our committees lately as well as additions to our staff.

As mentioned in the cover story, the Association hosted a very successful luncheon updating members on the status of the Grand Parkway. This project is something that I, as NHA president and your state senator, feel should be high on our priority list. The Grand Parkway will not be built overnight, and it is up to us, the business and community leaders, to not let the issue fade away. Our region's growth is dependent on good infrastructure.

Also on the transportation front, several NHA representatives will appear before the Texas Transportation Commission on August 26 to advocate for the Downtown Connector. This project is near to my heart - something I've been in favor of for some time now. This link between George Bush Intercontinental Airport and downtown Houston is critical to our economic success. I am seeking your support on both of these projects that will benefit north Houston.

Senator Jon Lindsay

Grand Parkway

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moderate the tremendous growth the north Harris and south Montgomery Counties are experiencing.

Congressman Brady concurs with the committee in his letter to the Association: "As we see Houston become an even busier international trade corridor, we need roads and highways that provide a safe and efficient way for automobiles and trucks to travel."

"The Grand Parkway will provide much-needed congestion mitigation and increased mobility for Houston.

Furthermore, it will provide an effective inter-modal link between our region's interstates and highways, the Port of Houston and George Bush Intercontinental Airport," he said. "I applaud the North Houston Association for continuing to provide support for the Grand Parkway and the region's transportation needs. As your representative in Congress, I remain proud of your contributions and long-term vision that you provide to the entire region on this and other projects." ■

TMO Hosts Event at Doss Center

The North Houston Association Transportation Management Organization (TMO) will host a luncheon at the Doss Center to educate senior citizens on their transportation options.

The event, to take place on October 22 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., is cosponsored by Commissioner Jerry Eversole and Harris County Precinct Four. Commissioner Eversole and Sen. Jon Lindsay will give opening remarks.

"Our goal is to take the fear out of riding a bus and to educate seniors on navigating through the many bus routes available within north Houston and beyond," said Staci Adams, TMO Coordinator. "Metro representatives will also speak on purchasing bus passes and the new, free lifetime pass for seniors over 70 years of age."

For more information on the event, contact Adams at 281/875-0660. ■

Time Running Out to Participate in Annual Golf Tournament

North Houston business leaders can tee off with public officials at the Fourth Annual North Houston Association Golf Tournament, to be held August 24 at Willow Creek Golf Club.

The tournament's honorary chairmen are Harris County Commissioner Jerry Eversole and Montgomery County Judge Alan Sadler.

Compaq Computer Corporation is the tournament's gold underwriter; Houston, Lighting & Power is the silver underwriter, and Southwestern Bell is the bronze underwriter.

In addition to Eversole and Sadler, a number of additional public officials will participate, including Sen. Jon Lindsay, city of Houston Council Members Ray Driscoll, Orlando Sanchez, Bruce Tatro and Martha Wong, Montgomery County Engineer Mark Mooney and Tomball City Manager Warren Driver, just to name a few. A public official will complete each foursome.

The tournament, chaired by Bobby Adams, Turner Collie & Braden, Inc., will begin with a shotgun start at 12 p.m., and will be followed by an awards dinner at 5 p.m.

Tournament contests include: First, Second and Third Place Teams, Putting Contest, Hole-in-One Contest, Longest Drive, Closest to the Pin, Chipping Contest, Betting Hole and a Circle Game. The Hole-in-One Contest prize will be a 1998 Buick Riviera, provided by DeMontrond Buick.

Available sponsorships at press time are: Team/Hole, Driving Range, Putting Contest, Trophy, and Beverage Cart.

For more information, contact the NHA office at 281/875-0660. ■

Economic Development Committee

The 1998 North Houston Association Aerial Land Use Map is scheduled to be completed by September.

Under the leadership of David Daleiden, Weingarten Realty Investors, the committee has solicited changes from all NHA members as well as all chambers of commerce in the Association's service area.

The following companies have committed to underwrite the map, and their logos will be prominently displayed: Carter & Burgess, Hines Interests Limited Partnership, Houston Lighting & Power Company, JNS Consulting Engineers Inc., North Harris Montgomery Community College District, Pate Engineers Inc., Shell Oil Company, South Montgomery County Economic Development Partnership, Southwestern Bell, Star Enterprise, Turner Collie & Braden and Weingarten Realty.

All NHA members will be notified in their Friday Facts when the maps are in the NHA offices.



Environment Committee

TNRCC's visit to Houston was an informational one (see related article). The Environment Committee will continue to follow this wetlands issue as more develops.

The Texas Water Development Board's Regional Planning Group for Region H has met three times since it was created.

The planning group, chaired by Jim Adams of the San Jacinto Water Authority, is responsible for developing a regional water plan for a 15-county area, including Harris County.

The group's executive committee is made up of the following individuals: Chairman Jim Adams, Vice Chairman

Judge Mark Evans, Secretary Frederick Perrenot, Michael Sullivan (small business representative), and Harold Wallace (water utilities representative).

Ron Neighbors, executive director of the Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District and member of the Region H Planning Group, will speak at the September 10th Environment Committee meeting.

Harris County's draft Regulations for Development Projects are still being revised by the county. The county plans to hire a team of consultants to handle the design items in the document. NHA will have an opportunity to comment on the revised draft document.



Grand Parkway Committee

The Grand Parkway Committee has compiled all information gathered on the project into one comprehensive informational document, which was distributed at the North Houston Association's recent membership luncheon (see cover story).

Anyone who was unable to attend the event can obtain a copy of the document by contacting the NHA office.

The committee will also review its goals and objectives and determine what steps need to be taken regarding landholders.

NHA has a PowerPoint presentation on the subject that is available to community organizations and chambers of commerce. Contact the NHA office if you know of an organization that would like to schedule a presentation.



Transportation Committee

Transportation Committee representatives will attend the August 26th

Texas Transportation Commission meeting in Austin to advocate for the Downtown Connector and other projects identified by the Association as priority projects. If you are interested in attending this meeting, contact Catherine Wray in the NHA office.

The Airport Connectors document has been updated with new project information and is currently being reprinted.

The Transportation Committee continues its revision of the Association's Mobility Update.

A database is being created to house information on transportation projects in the north Houston region. It will be useful in the periodic revisions of the Mobility Update as well as serve as a resource to NHA members when seeking information on mobility projects in north Houston.



Alliance of North Houston Chambers of Commerce

The Alliance of North Houston Chambers of Commerce (ANHOC) held its first regional planning session in May.

In addition to ANHOC members, invited elected officials, including Harris County Judge Robert Eckels, Montgomery County Judge Alan Sadler and the city of Houston's Chief of Staff Al Haines attended the event.

At the session, it was decided to focus on four major areas of interest in the next year: water supply, transportation, air quality and skilled workforce acquisition/development.

ANHOC is a legislative-oriented alliance made up of representatives from the North Houston Association and six north Houston area chambers of commerce. ■

TNRCC Speaks on Draft Guidance Document

The North Houston Association hosted a meeting in August to educate its members on the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's (TNRCC) recently released draft Regulatory Guidance Document for implementation of Texas Water Quality Certification Rules.

"We asked TNRCC to brief our membership on the guidance document so that our committee as well as our individual members will be well informed on the draft's contents. This will allow us to submit pertinent comments to the TNRCC during the public comment period," said HNTB Corporation's David Millikan, chairman, NHA Environment Committee. "Many NHA members face wetland permitting issues on a regular basis and benefit from learning about the latest

proposed regulatory guidelines first hand."



TNRCC staff members Sally Gutierrez, Mark Fisher and Anthony Tatu take questions regarding the agency's guidance document.

TNRCC staff member Carol Kim pointed out that, "No new policies are being created. The purpose of the document is to provide guidance on current policies. We are trying to improve coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers."

TNRCC is responsible for conducting 401 certification reviews of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit applications for the discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands. This regulatory document, Implementation of Texas Water Quality Certification Rules, is designed to provide assistance, information, and clarity to applicants seeking certification of such permits.

Draft copies of the guidance document are available at the NHA office. Deadline for comment to TNRCC is September 3. NHA will meet jointly with the West Houston Association and the Greater Houston Partnership on August 12 to compile a joint set of comments which will be forwarded to TNRCC. ■

NHA Adds Three New Members

Three companies have joined the ranks of NHA membership in the last quarter: Pappas Restaurants, Inc., Town Center Improvement District and Union Pacific Railroad Company.

Pappas Restaurants, Inc. is a family-owned restaurant company with 50 locations in Houston and other Texas cities, Georgia and Illinois.

Locally, Houstonians are familiar with their restaurants: Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen, Cafe Pappadeaux, Pappasito's Cantina, Pappas Seafood House, Pappas Bar-B-Q, Pappas Bros. Steakhouse, C&H Steak Company, Pappamia Italian Kitchen, and Pappas Restaurants Catering.

Pappas Restaurants serve everything from mexican and barbecue to cajun and creole seafood. Their website is: <http://pappas-restaurants.com>.

Town Center Improvement District

(TCID) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1993. TCID is a unit of government chartered to provide services to benefit the public within a 1.2 square mile area of The Woodlands Town Center. Located north of Houston in Montgomery County, Town Center is the business, retail and entertainment "downtown" of the highly-acclaimed master planned community, The Woodlands. TCID's initial focus on public safety has led to a significant police presence in Town Center.

The District has expanded its program efforts to include marketing and promoting the image of Town Center, hosting region-wide events, visual improvements, and economic development.

TCID's activities are funded solely by a one-cent sales tax in The Woodlands Town Center. The District utilizes

these funds to provide public services and enhancements to maintain Town Center as a safe and attractive urban center.

The third new member is Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP), the largest railroad in North America. UP is an operating subsidiary of Union Pacific Corporation (NYSE:UNP).

It operates in the western two-thirds of the United States and serves 23 states. The railroad is the primary rail connection between the U.S. and Mexico.

UP has one of the most diversified commodity mixes in the industry, including chemicals, coal, food and food products, forest products, grain products, intermodal, metals and minerals, and automobiles and parts. UP's largest customer is APL Limited, a steamship company that operates in the Pacific. ■

NHA-TMO Receives Award

The North Houston Association's Transportation Management Organization (TMO) recently received an award from the Clean Air Action Program and the Clean Air Coalition in recognition of NHA's actions taken to reduce the impact of ground-level ozone and improve the area's air quality.

"The North Houston Association has assisted in getting the word out about clean air in a number of ways," said Brian Wolfe, senior TDM planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council.

"NHA has hosted a number of transportation booths to educate the public on their commuting options as

well as meeting with companies, such as Chelsea Catering (a division of Continental Airlines) to assist their employees in finding alternative modes of transportation."

The Clean Air Action Program is run by the Houston-Galveston Area Council. The Clean Air Action Program and the Clean Air Coalition are voluntary public/private initiatives striving to educate the public about air quality issues and resulting health effects facing the region. Members include governments, businesses, environmental and health organizations, transportation authorities and public interest groups. ■

NHA-TMO to Host Information Booths

The NHA-TMO will host information booths at the following events:

August 27

Humble Area Chamber
Business-Health Expo
Humble Civic Center

September 17

Montgomery County
Works Job Fair
Woodlands Conference
Center

50% Off Metro in August

August is Clean Air Month, and Metro wants to do its part in reducing high ozone concentrations caused from several emission sources like autos and industry.

Through support of the Clean Air Coalition and its Clean Air Action Program, Metro is offering half-price fares during August.

All cash fares will be half price, and stored value cards will be discounted automatically at the fare box. All daily, weekly and monthly passes will be at 50 percent off the normal purchase price. This discount will be in addition to any

already discounted fares for students, seniors, etc. Also, the Texas Special buses that run downtown will be free in August.

In addition to leaving your car at home, there are a number of other things you can do to help in the fight for clean air: combine errands for fewer trips, avoid idling in drive-through lanes, keep your vehicle properly tuned to keep exhaust levels low, postpone refueling until late afternoon, don't top off gas tank when refueling, make certain your gas cap is tightly sealed, and use electric instead of gas powered tools. ■

Adams, Wisniewski Join NHA Staff

With increased NHA activity, the Association has hired two new staff members, one to manage the Transportation Management Organization (TMO) and the other to coordinate Association projects.

Staci Adams is the new TMO Projects Coordinator. In her position, Adams will manage the daily activities of the TMO as well as arrange special events, such as the one at

the Doss Center in October (see related article).

Adams will visit north Houston companies



Adams

and inform their employees on the benefits of ride sharing.

"I've assisted NHA in the past as a volunteer for the golf tournament, and I'm very excited to be on staff now," said Adams.

The Association's new Projects Coordinator is Pat Wisniewski.

Wisniewski will oversee the Golf Committee, Economic Development Committee and Environment Committee.



Wisniewski

"This position is such a great opportunity to learn about the issues that affect north Houston," said Wisniewski. "I live within our service area and find all the projects to be interesting." ■

Upcoming Events

NHA Committee Meetings

Transportation

The Transportation Committee will meet at 11:30 a.m. on August 27, September 23 and October 28 in the Greenspoint Conference Center (16825 Northchase Dr., Ste. 100). Contact the NHA office to RSVP.

Environment

The Environment Committee will meet at 11:30 a.m. on August 13, September 10 and October 8 in the Greenspoint Conference Center. Contact the NHA office to RSVP.

Economic Development

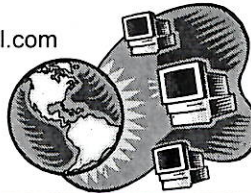
The Economic Development Committee will meet at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 19 in the Greenspoint Conference Center (16825 Northchase Dr., Ste. 100). Contact the NHA office to RSVP.

Grand Parkway

The Grand Parkway Committee will meet August 20, September 9 and October 14 at 7:30 a.m. in the Greenspoint Conference Center. Contact the NHA office to RSVP.

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Special Thanks...

to JNS Consulting Engineers, Inc. and the Sheraton North Houston Hotel for their generous underwriting of this issue of "NHA VISION."



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