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GRAND PARKWAY SEGMENT C
PUBLIC HEARING for
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

JUNE 13, 2000

AT

7:00 P.M.

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH
COUNTY ROAD 48
MANVEL, TEXAS

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1 MS. STERRY: Good evening. On behalf of
2 the Texas Department of Transportation and the Grand
3 Parkway Association, I would like to welcome each of you
4 to this public hearing for Segment C of the Grand
5 Parkway.

6 Segment C of the Grand Parkway extends
7 from U.S. 59 in Fort Bend County to State Highway 288 in
8 Brazoria County.

9 My name is Robin Sterry, and I'm with the
10 Houston District of the Texas Department of
11 Transportation, also known as TxDOT. TxDOT has the
12 responsibility for the planning, design, construction,
13 and maintenance of State highways in Texas.

14 It is our responsibility under a variety
15 of Federal laws, including the National Environment
16 Policy Act, to prepare an Environmental Impact
17 Statement, commonly referred to as an EIS, to examine
18 the need for a project and the impacts of any
19 transportation improvements. The EIS must address a
20 variety of alternatives to meet the transportation needs
21 of this area.

22 Tonight we will be presenting the
23 findings of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or
24 DEIS, of Segment C of the Grand Parkway. The
25 preparation of the DEIS is the responsibility of TxDOT

1 and the Federal Highway Administration. The DEIS being
2 presented tonight does not include the selection of a
3 Preferred Alternative. It examines the environmental
4 consequences of several alternatives including the
5 no-build alternative. A Preferred Alternative will be
6 selected once comments from the public and from the
7 resource agencies are received and considered.

8 The purpose of tonight's public hearing
9 is to present the findings of the DEIS, and more
10 importantly, to seek public comments on the proposed
11 action and work performed to date.

12 Although approval of the DEIS by the
13 Federal Highway Administration cleared the way for
14 tonight's activities, it in no way represents a final
15 approval of Segment C or a proposed route.

16 All comments received tonight as well as
17 written comments postmarked by July 13th, 2000, will be
18 included in the official public hearing record and will
19 be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact
20 Statement, or FEIS.

21 The DEIS was circulated to numerous State
22 and Federal resource agencies on May 1st, 2000. It has
23 also been made available to the public through placement
24 at TxDOT's Houston District Office, public libraries
25 within the study area, and the Grand Parkway

1 Association's office. Comments to the DEIS must also be
2 postmarked by July 13th, 2000.

3 This public hearing is being held
4 pursuant to Federal rules and regulations implementing
5 the National Environment Policy Act of 1969 and
6 governing the development of the environmental impact
7 statements for transportation improvements.

8 This public hearing is being recorded by
9 a certified court reporter.

10 This is one of two locations for public
11 hearings for Segment C of the Grand Parkway tonight.
12 This same presentation is now being made in Fort Bend
13 County.

14 Before we begin our technical
15 presentations, I'd like to make a few announcements.
16 First, I want to thank everyone for being here tonight
17 to participate in this public hearing. We appreciate
18 your interest, and we welcome your comments later this
19 evening. We'd also like to thank the Sacred Heart
20 Catholic Church for allowing us to use these facilities
21 tonight.

22 You may have noticed our registration
23 table as you walked in. If you have not already done
24 so, please register before you leave tonight. The
25 sign-in sheets allow us to record tonight's

1 participation and gives you the opportunity to be added
2 to our project mailing list.

3 You will have an opportunity to make
4 comments tonight. Your comments are welcome with
5 respect to any aspect of the project including, but not
6 limited to: The project's purpose and need, the
7 project's alternatives, the criteria for screening
8 alternatives, the project's environmental and physical
9 constraints.

10 You can make comments in two different
11 ways, orally or in writing.

12 To make oral comments, you need to have
13 completed the speaker registration card. If you would
14 like to make oral comments but have not filled out the
15 card, please raise your hand now and we will make sure
16 that you get a card.

17 We also have a court reporter here to
18 make record of your oral comments at tonight's meeting.

19 The format for making oral comments is
20 simple. We will call on those who completed speaker
21 request cards in the order which the cards were
22 received. You will make your comments located at the
23 microphone in the center aisle.

24 We ask that you limit your comments to
25 three minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak. A

1 some of the members of the community who are here
2 tonight in their official capacity.

3 We have Mayor Robert Wall from Iowa
4 Colony. Mayor Wall.

5 Commissioner James Clauson from Brazoria
6 County.

7 We have Dick Carter from the City of
8 Alvin.

9 And we have Commissioner Donald -- I'm
10 sorry about the pronunciation -- Shearman.

11 COMMISSIONER SHEARMAN: I'm not here in
12 my official capacity.

13 MS. STERRY: All right. Thank you, sir.

14 And we also have Commissioner Jack Harris
15 who just walked in that's with us tonight.

16 Thank y'all for coming.

17 Also, I want to introduce the people
18 sitting here beside me. These individuals are part of a
19 study team responsible for preparing the DEIS for
20 Segment C of the Grand Parkway.

21 I have Ms. Diane Schenke from the Grand
22 Parkway Association, Mr. Bob Arroyave from Brown & Gay
23 Engineers, and Mr. Glenn Graham from PBS&J.

24 Briefly I'd like to explain the agendas
25 of tonight's meeting.

1 First, Diane Schenke of the Grand Parkway
2 Association will provide an overview of the Grand
3 Parkway Association, a history of the project, and the
4 purpose and need for the project.

5 Next, Bob Arroyave of Brown & Gay
6 Engineers will describe various alternatives that have
7 been studied.

8 Next, Glenn Graham of PBS&J will provide
9 an overview of the environmental consequences of each of
10 the Representative Alternatives.

11 Then I will provide an overview of
12 TxDOT's right-of-way acquisition and relocation policy.

13 After these presentations, we will take a
14 15-minute break so that you may display -- may view the
15 displays located to my right and ask questions of the
16 study team.

17 Finally after the break, we will
18 reconvene to receive oral comments.

19 Now, I'm going to turn the presentation
20 over to Diane Schenke of the Grand Parkway Association.
21 Diane will provide an overview of the Grand Parkway
22 Association, a history of the project, and the purpose
23 and need of the project.

24 MS. SCHENKE: Thank you, Robin. And it's
25 good to see so many of you here tonight. I would like

1 to begin with a quick overview of what the Grand Parkway
2 Association is.

3 We are a transportation corporation
4 that's charged with working with local governments,
5 landowners, and TxDOT to build the third outer loop
6 around Houston. We accomplish this through partnerships
7 with local governments, with TxDOT and landowners.

8 In the case of Segment C -- this segment
9 that we're talking about tonight, we have Fort Bend
10 County, Brazoria County, and TxDOT, all of whom are
11 involved in funding the engineering design and the
12 environmental studies which the Grand Parkway oversees.

13 TxDOT will be responsible for the
14 construction and the maintenance of this highway.

15 The Grand Parkway, which is also known as
16 State Highway 99, will form a 170-mile circumferential
17 freeway around the greater metropolitan area. The Grand
18 Parkway would provide access to radial freeways and
19 would serve as a third outer loop at a radial distance
20 of between 20 and 30 miles outside of the downtown
21 Houston, similar to Beltway 8 and Loop 610.

22 The Grand Parkway is proposed to be
23 constructed as a landscaped and controlled access
24 Parkway that typically will not have frontage roads.
25 The frontage roads will be constructed only where they

1 are necessary to provide access at interchanges and
2 where they are required to continue providing access to
3 adjacent property.

4 For planning and design purposes, the
5 Grand Parkway's been divided into nine different
6 segments. These segments have been identified on this
7 map as Segments A through Segment I. We are here
8 tonight to discuss Segment C which traverses through
9 from U.S. 59 South to State Highway 288 through Fort
10 Bend and Brazoria Counties.

11 The Congress of the United States has
12 determined that it is acceptable to study and develop
13 the Grand Parkway on a segment-by-segment basis. The
14 Department of Transportation Appropriation Bill that was
15 adopted in July of '93 specifically instructed the
16 Federal Highway Administration to prepare EISs for the
17 Grand Parkway on a segment-by-segment basis.

18 Each segment of the Grand Parkway that is
19 studied must have independent utility; that is, each
20 segment must constitute a complete and independently
21 justifiable project without reliance on any other
22 segment to make a usable piece of freeway.

23 During development of the draft DEIS for
24 Segment C, the purpose and need for Segment C has been
25 studied and documented. Segment C's purpose and need

1 has two components: The first is to relieve local and
2 regional congestion in the area, and the second is to
3 improve hurricane evacuation.

4 The first component of the purpose and
5 need for Segment C is to improve mobility and to relieve
6 local congestion which has resulted from the high
7 population growth, increased residential development,
8 and the increased commercial development within and
9 adjacent to the study area.

10 Also, this facility is needed to relieve
11 regional congestion which has resulted from increasing
12 regional development associated with the strong Houston,
13 Texas, and U.S. economies through the 1990s.

14 The second component of the purpose and
15 need for Segment C is to provide additional capacity
16 around the southern portion of Houston for evacuations
17 from the coast prior to or during a hurricane.

18 Currently State Highway 288 serves as
19 the main hurricane evacuation route in Brazoria County.
20 Similarly, Interstate 45 and State Highway 6 serve as
21 the main hurricane evacuation routes for Galveston
22 County. The evacuation adequacy of these routes has
23 been questioned because they leave traffic into the
24 congested Houston metropolitan area.

25 This concludes my portion of the

1 presentation. I'm now going to turn the microphone over
2 to Bob Arroyave with Brown & Gay Engineers. He will
3 discuss the alternatives considered for Segment C.

4 MR. ARROYAVE: Thank you, Diane.

5 Our study team, along with the Grand
6 Parkway Association, TxDOT, and the Federal Highway
7 Administration, has been preparing the DEIS that we are
8 presenting to you here tonight since our last public
9 workshop in October of '98.

10 At that workshop, we presented an
11 overview of constraints in the study area and a large
12 group of alternative corridors. Since that workshop, we
13 have performed environmental field investigations within
14 the alternative corridors.

15 As a result of these investigations, we
16 have eliminated many of the corridors from consideration
17 due to various impacts. What remains today is a group
18 of eight Representative Alternatives which will be
19 presented tonight and are described in detail in the
20 DEIS.

21 Before discussion of the eight
22 Representative Alternative corridors, I want to review
23 the study process we have followed that resulted in the
24 eight Representative Alternatives which remain for
25 consideration.

1 This study is being performed in three
2 phases. At this point in time, we are nearing the end
3 of Phase 2. Phase 1 included an evaluation and
4 screening of all alternatives. Phase 2 included a more
5 detailed evaluation and screening of a smaller group of
6 alternatives. Phase 3 will include a detailed
7 evaluation of the Preferred Alternative.

8 In early 1998, we began to study
9 Segment C. Several public meetings have been held for
10 Segment C over the past two years.

11 On March 5th, 1998, a meeting was held
12 with transportation agencies and counties to talk about
13 the need for a facility. Also on March 5th, 1998,
14 another meeting was held with resource agencies to
15 discuss impacts to Brazos Bend State Park and potential
16 mitigation alternatives.

17 On April 22, 1998, an open house was held
18 for everyone, although environmental interest groups
19 were specifically invited.

20 On April 27, 1998, an open house was held
21 for citizens within the study area.

22 On August 20th, 1998, a public scoping
23 meeting for Segment C was held which included a
24 presentation of the project study area, the study
25 process, and constraints within the study area.

1 On October 27, 1998, a public workshop
2 for Segment C was held and included exhibits that showed
3 all alternative corridors developed by the study team.

4 A key element of this process has been
5 the criteria used in evaluating and eliminating
6 alternatives. All alternatives have been evaluated
7 based upon criteria stipulated in NEPA, the National
8 Environment Policy Act, and in ISTEA, the Intermodal
9 Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. These include
10 natural environment, human environment, mobility,
11 investment, engineering, and other criteria identified
12 during the study process.

13 Initially, per the requirements of the
14 National Environment Policy Act, the study team
15 considered a large range of mode alternatives to meet
16 the purpose and need for this facility.

17 As you recall, Diane mentioned that the
18 purpose for this facility are regional congestion
19 relief, local congestion relief, and hurricane
20 evacuation capacity.

21 Several mode alternatives listed on this
22 slide were considered and eliminated because they did
23 not adequately meet this purpose.

24 Transportation system management, or TSM
25 alternatives, are those actions which maximize the

1 efficiency of the present roadway system. Two examples
2 of TSM alternatives are Park & Ride lots and traffic
3 signal coordination.

4 Travel demand management, or TDM
5 measures, consist of behavioral changes to commuters'
6 travel habits which result in fewer vehicles during the
7 peak hours. These measures, such as car pooling or
8 telecommuting, are beneficial but do not completely meet
9 the purpose for this proposed facility.

10 Other alternatives which were eliminated
11 because they did not fully meet the purpose for this
12 facility included HOV lanes, rail transit, bus transit,
13 bicycle paths, bicycle lanes, added capacity to existing
14 roadways, and new roadways.

15 The correct mode alternative for a
16 transportation facility in this study area is a new
17 location-controlled access highway. This type of
18 facility will best satisfy the purpose and need of the
19 project: Congestion relief, increased local and
20 regional mobility, and increased capacity for hurricane
21 evacuation needs.

22 The study area is shown on this slide.
23 Key features of the study area are the George Ranch,
24 Lake Worthington, Thompson's Oil Field, Brazos Bend
25 State Park, and the Texas Department of Criminal

1 Justice's Darrington Unit.

2 At the beginning of Phase 1, the study
3 team identified known constraints from recorded
4 databases and through site visits via public
5 rights-of-way. All of the constraints are shown on the
6 large exhibits on display.

7 During Phase 1, the study team developed
8 alternatives based upon input from local officials and
9 the public. The alternatives shown here are shown in
10 more detail in the exhibits at this public hearing. The
11 study team reduced this group of alternatives to the
12 group of reasonable alternatives by eliminating several
13 based upon impacts quantified during Phase 1.

14 Segment B2, highlighted here in blue, was
15 eliminated because of impacts to forested wetlands and
16 prairie vegetative communities.

17 Segment E1 was eliminated because of
18 impacts to the historic community of Crabb.

19 Segment F1 and two connecting segments
20 were eliminated because of impacts to potential historic
21 structures on the George Ranch and because of its close
22 proximity to the George Ranch Historical Park.

23 Segment A7 was eliminated because of
24 impacts to forested and nonforested wetlands, Thompson's
25 Oil Field, floodplains, and nonconformity with local

1 planning.

2 Segment M1 was eliminated because of
3 impacts to Schlumberger's Perforating and Testing
4 Center.

5 Segment B8 and its connecting segments
6 to State Highway 288 were eliminated because of impacts
7 to the dark skies south of the George Observatory of
8 Brazos Bend State Park, impacts to historical
9 plantations in the vicinity of China Grove and Bonney,
10 and impacts to commercial and residential properties
11 along FM 1462 and in the vicinity of Rosharon.

12 The result was a group of alternatives
13 that the study team termed as "reasonable alternatives."
14 These were the alternatives to be studied in greater
15 detail in Phase 2.

16 During Phase 2, the study team performed
17 nondestructive environmental field investigations within
18 the reasonable alternative corridors to better identify
19 and quantify the environmental consequences of each of
20 the reasonable alternatives.

21 As the study team began to document the
22 environmental consequences of each of the reasonable
23 alternatives in the DEIS, TxDOT's Environmental Affairs
24 Division asked the study team to reevaluate and screen
25 the group of alternatives to a smaller group of

1 alternatives for discussion in the DEIS.

2 In the screening of the reasonable
3 alternatives, the study team found three impacts that
4 resulted in the elimination of additional alternatives.

5 Segment D1, highlighted here in blue, was
6 eliminated due to rapid development in the northern
7 portion the study area. The new development, which
8 occurred after selection of the reasonable alternatives,
9 included 29 single-family site-built homes that would be
10 impacted by Segment D1. This development was platted
11 after the study commenced in 1998. Some of the 29 homes
12 exist, and some are currently under construction.

13 Segment A4 and two connecting segments
14 were eliminated because of impacts to the George Ranch
15 Historical Park. The George Ranch Historical Park
16 overlooks Smithers Lake. Segment A4 would obstruct the
17 view shed to the east of the park onto the lake.

18 Segment G3, G4, H1, and J2 were
19 eliminated because of impacts to a bald eagle's nest.

20 The most significant discovery of the
21 field investigations during Phase 2 was the bald eagle's
22 nest. The bald eagle is currently a federally listed
23 threatened species. Their nests are protected by
24 primary and secondary management zones. The zones can
25 restrict certain types of activity within their

1 vicinity. These zones cause the elimination of the
2 three southern alternatives.

3 The elimination of these three
4 alternatives left only one alternative in the middle
5 portion of the study area. In order to maintain a
6 southern alternative through the middle portion of the
7 study area, the study team created a new segment,
8 Segment T1, which stayed an acceptable distance away
9 from the eagle's nest.

10 Also, the elimination of Segments D1 and
11 A4 left only one alternative in the northern portion of
12 the study area. Similarly, the study team developed a
13 new segment, Segment S1, to provide for a second
14 alternative in the northern portion of the study area.

15 The second screening process resulted in
16 eight remaining Representative Alternatives. This
17 screening process was approved by TxDOT's Environmental
18 Affairs Division and the Federal Highway Administration
19 in August of 1999. Eight Representative Alternatives
20 remain and are described in detail along with the
21 no-build alternative in the DEIS.

22 This concludes my portion of the
23 presentation. I'm now going to turn the presentation
24 over to Glenn Graham of the study team who will be
25 discussing the environmental consequences of each of the

1 eight Representative Alternatives.

2 MR. GRAHAM: Thank you, Bob. I would now
3 like to focus on environmental issues associated with
4 this project.

5 As mentioned earlier, the National
6 Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, places a great deal
7 of importance on public participation. Your presence
8 here tonight is essential to the NEPA process, and we
9 appreciate your interest and involvement. The Final
10 Environmental Impact Statement will document and respond
11 to all of your comments along with those of the various
12 agencies involved.

13 If changes to the project design or
14 alternatives are determined necessary as a result of the
15 public involvement process and the DEIS review process,
16 those changes will be addressed in the final
17 Environmental Impact Statement.

18 I would like to draw your attention to
19 the exhibits and handouts that we have in the room here
20 tonight and encourage each of you to look at the
21 information displayed.

22 This slide is a table from Section 4 of
23 the DEIS that quantitatively summarizes the key impacts
24 for each alternative.

25 This chart, along with copies of the

1 DEIS, are on display and available for review in the
2 back of the room.

3 Rather than repeating the quantified
4 impacts for each alternative now, I would like to give
5 you a brief overview of some of the main environmental
6 issues.

7 While developing and screening
8 alternatives, environmental impacts were either avoided
9 or minimized to the maximum extent practicable. Impacts
10 were measured within a 300-foot right-of-way footprint
11 for each Representative Alternative using secondary data
12 sources as well as extensive field research.

13 There are two major ecological issues
14 that warrant explicit mention. The first is forested
15 wetland impacts, and the second is protected species.

16 The Representative Alternatives that have
17 been carried through Phase 2 require a decision as to
18 whether the Preferred Alternative will impact forested
19 wetlands and Colombia Bottomland Forest in the Rabbs
20 Bayou-Big Creek corridor.

21 None of the Representative Alternatives
22 completely avoids impacts to wetlands. However, each
23 Representative Alternative alignment was moved around
24 within the thousand-foot corridor during Phase 1 in
25 order to minimize wetland impacts.

1 The resulting Representative Alternatives
2 impacts between -- the resulting Representative
3 Alternatives impacts between 25.3 and 67.2 acres of
4 wetlands.

5 Unavoidable impacts to wetlands will be
6 specifically addressed in the Final EIS pending the
7 selection of a Preferred Alternative and the development
8 of a compensatory wetland mitigation plan.

9 Also, a determination must be made as to
10 whether the Preferred Alternative, when chosen, would
11 encroach on the management zones of the bald eagle nest
12 located north of the Brazos Bend State Park.

13 Four of the Representative Alternatives
14 include a segment that potentially encroaches upon the
15 management zones for an existing bald eagle's nest.

16 Since the management zones are a
17 recommendation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and
18 their bald eagle management guidelines, the study team
19 has initiated coordination with the U.S. Fish and
20 Wildlife Service and is currently monitoring the status
21 of the nest and its success.

22 The occurrence of the nest is complicated
23 by the fact that the Brazos Bend State Park is located
24 to the south. Study team biologists have been
25 monitoring the nest and the bald eagle's feeding habits

1 for the past eight months.

2 These conflicts may be resolved by the
3 proposed de-listing of the bald eagle. The bald eagle
4 is scheduled to be de-listed as a threatened species in
5 July of this year.

6 Although all regulatory protection will
7 not cease upon de-listing, the de-listing may allow the
8 study team to reconsider alternatives that were
9 eliminated because of the proximity to the nest.

10 Specifically, we will reconsider
11 alternatives that include Segment G3 in the Final
12 Environmental Impact Statement.

13 Other environmental issues that were
14 researched and considered in the DEIS include social
15 issues, vegetative communities, relocations, air
16 quality, noise, floodplains, historic and archaeological
17 resources, and hazardous materials. Again, you can find
18 these impacts quantified in the handouts or in the DEIS.

19 The constraints I have just discussed are
20 some of the more significant environmental consequences
21 of the alternatives being considered. All environmental
22 consequences are described in the DEIS.

23 If you know of any other environmental
24 issues that should be further addressed, please let us
25 know through your verbal or written comments.

1 The Final Environmental Impact Statement
2 will document and respond to all of your comments along
3 with those of the various agencies involved.

4 If changes to the project design or
5 alternatives are determined necessary as a result of the
6 public involvement and DEIS review process, those
7 changes will be addressed in the Final Environmental
8 Impact Statement.

9 That concludes my portion of the
10 presentation. I am now going to turn the presentation
11 back over to Robin Sterry with TxDOT who will be
12 discussing TxDOT's right-of-way acquisition and
13 relocation program.

14 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Glenn.

15 At this time I would like to present
16 TxDOT's policies on right-of-way acquisition and
17 relocation assistance.

18 Both the United States and the Texas
19 Constitutions provide that no private land may be taken
20 for public purposes without adequate compensation being
21 paid therefor.

22 The TxDOT right-of-way acquisition and
23 Relocation Assistance Program will be conducted in
24 accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and
25 Real Property Acquisition Policy Acts of 1970 as

1 amended.

2 Relocation resources are available to all
3 residential and businesses -- business relocatees
4 without discrimination. Thus, all landowners from whom
5 property is needed for highway purposes are entitled to
6 be paid for that property.

7 In that regard, TxDOT contracts with
8 independent fee appraisers who inspect the individual
9 parcels of land needed for highway purposes, and they
10 prepare appraisal reports for the property to arrive at
11 the amount of just compensation to be paid.

12 Just compensation is based upon the fair
13 market value of the land. Simply stated, this is the
14 amount a willing seller would expect from a willing
15 buyer, neither being under any compulsion to buy or sell
16 and both having reasonable knowledge of all relevant
17 facts.

18 After the appraisal is completed, each
19 property owner will be personally contacted by a
20 representative from TxDot's right-of-way section and
21 given a copy of the appraisal of their property. That
22 individual will go over in detail the steps involved in
23 acquiring property for highway purposes. These steps
24 include an opportunity to make a one-time counteroffer
25 to TxDOT.

1 Under the laws of eminent domain, if the
2 property owners feel they are not being justly
3 compensated, they have the right to pursue a hearing by
4 three special commissioners; and if still not satisfied,
5 the amount will be determined by a six-person jury.

6 Occasionally TxDOT receives or solicits
7 donations of private land for highway purposes.
8 However, whether or not such land is ultimately donated
9 is based upon the free and voluntary act of the
10 individual property owner and only after the property
11 owner has been informed of the right to receive just
12 compensation for the property.

13 Detailed information regarding
14 right-of-way acquisition procedures can be obtained from
15 the TxDOT right-of-way acquisition representative.

16 Booklets entitled The State Right-of-Way
17 Purchase are also available for your information which
18 provide general information on acquisition procedures.
19 We have several copies of these booklets here this
20 evening with a right-of-way representative at the back
21 of the room.

22 The development of highways or other
23 public transportation services needed to serve and
24 improve our way of life require the use of land. This,
25 in turn, means that some persons may be required to move

1 to another location.

2 TxDOT is aware of the cost and the
3 inconvenience associated with having to move from a
4 home, business, or farm. In order to assist those who
5 are required to move, TxDOT provides payment and
6 services to aid in movement to a new location through
7 its Relocation Assistance Program.

8 It is TxDOT policy on residential
9 relocation that no person will be displaced due to
10 right-of-way acquisition until safe and sanitary
11 replacement housing is available in the area. The
12 available housing must also be open to persons
13 regardless of race, color, religion, or nationality and
14 be within the financial means of the person displaced.

15 Relocation assistance is available to all
16 individuals, families, businesses, farms, and nonprofit
17 organizations displaced as a result of the State highway
18 or other transportation project. This assistance
19 applies to tenants as well as owners occupying the real
20 property needed for the project.

21 Replacement properties must be comparable
22 with regard to the type of construction, design, age,
23 and condition and must be located in the comparable
24 neighborhood with equally accessible public services and
25 places of employment.

1 during the break, and we'll start our break now and
2 reconvene at about five till. Thank you.

3 (Brief recess)

4 MS. STERRY: If we could reconvene,
5 please. I'd like to recognize an individual that I
6 missed earlier, Kay Belle Mudd, who is the City Council
7 of Iowa Colony, back in the corner there.

8 And we also had a question arise about is
9 this information available on the Web. There is a Grand
10 Parkway Web site. It is [www.grandpky](http://www.grandpky.com) -- that's one
11 word, G-R-A-N-D-P-K-Y, .com. Some of the things that
12 will be on that Web site is the script for tonight's
13 hearing. There is also the executive summary from the
14 EIS.

15 We've received several cards from
16 individuals which may -- which wish to make oral
17 comments. If you would like to make oral comments but
18 have not filled out the card, please raise your hand and
19 we'll make sure that you get a card.

20 I would like to go over the format for
21 making oral comments one more time. We will call on
22 those of you who have completed speaker registration
23 cards in the order in which the cards were received.

24 Please make your comments at the
25 microphone located in the center aisle. We ask that you

1 limit your comments to three minutes so that everyone
2 has a chance to speak. This timer will be used to limit
3 each speaker to three minutes.

4 Please do not repeat things that other
5 commentators have already said. This will help us move
6 along and give everyone a chance to speak. We request
7 that you limit your comments both for or against to
8 issues related to Segment C of the Grand Parkway.

9 We will not respond to your comments
10 during this meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to
11 receive your inputs and comments on issues that should
12 be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement.
13 Each of your comments will be addressed or answered in
14 the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

15 We have a couple of elected officials
16 that would like to speak.

17 Mayor Robert Wall from Iowa Colony.

18 MAYOR WALL: First, I would like to
19 welcome you tonight to Iowa Colony, which the church
20 here is in. I am the mayor of Iowa Colony. I am here
21 basically speaking for the City; and I think we have
22 some council members here that will speak, also.

23 I think that -- I'm sure there's people
24 in our city that would be for this; but at our city
25 council meetings, they've been mainly against this.

1 A couple of points I'd like to make. One
2 is with Highway 6 expanding like it is, I see this as
3 kind of strange that P1 would be so close to that. That
4 is an evacuation route. That's a brand-new widened
5 road. I would think this road would need to be further
6 down in the county.

7 Right now, when you're in Iowa Colony,
8 when you go out and try to get on the freeway in the
9 mornings and evenings, it's almost impossible. I have
10 talked to the highway department about this, and they
11 don't really say they can -- they are not going to do
12 anything about it real soon.

13 I see with this road coming in, surely
14 you will have an off ramp at 288. If you do, you're
15 going to throw more traffic on citizens trying to get on
16 that road in the morning and in the evening.

17 As it is right now, I'm starting to see
18 farm trucks actually run the stop signs because they
19 can't get enough speed up to cross that road. It's like
20 crossing 45 or something with just a stop sign.

21 I'd like to go back to city hall. If you
22 take the P1 route, it would come down 63, which would
23 run right through our city hall.

24 Iowa Colony City Hall, the area there was
25 originated in '39 as a school, the best of what I've

1 been told. The school was there for a long time until
2 they joined Manvel as a school, and then that building
3 was used for a community center.

4 That is -- there is a building there now
5 that we now use as our city hall. We have one of the
6 largest meeting rooms in our city hall of anybody around
7 here including Manvel, Alvin. I mean, we have a place
8 we rent out. We let charities use it like the church
9 here does.

10 We also have a fire department right next
11 door to us. We heard it was told that we were in a
12 double-wide trailer. We're not in a double-wide
13 trailer. We have a metal building; and our fire
14 department has a metal building, which we're looking at
15 expanding right now which this would run right into.

16 The City of Iowa Colony is a rural area.
17 We're zoning right now for the reason of keeping it that
18 way, trying to let the people live out there. Most of
19 the people that live in Iowa Colony was either raised
20 there or moved from somewhere like a city to get away
21 from being in the City of Houston or around -- like
22 Pasadena, myself.

23 We really don't want this road coming
24 right through, splitting our city; and it will do just
25 that. It will split our city. The road that you're

1 coming through is one of the more populated roads in our
2 city, which would be 63.

3 We have a lot of new houses going up
4 right now in that area, which I would think if that area
5 was going to be picked, somebody should warn some of
6 these people because I think that would be a shame to
7 have somebody build a house without knowing this. In
8 fact, I think through real estate, you almost have to do
9 that.

10 When I came into the city, we had, like,
11 875 people; and I think since with the Census, we're
12 probably up close to a thousand people out there. So I
13 mean, we really -- I feel like splitting our city, it
14 would be a shame, really.

15 The lower route below P1 would be in an
16 area I don't know who would be against. I'm sure there
17 would be somebody here tonight that would be against but
18 not like it would be in our area, to be honest with you.

19 One of the points I'd like to make is we
20 have a very small fire department. We have one county
21 truck, and our firemen are all volunteers. They show up
22 when they get dispatched. The way I understand, this
23 would be the furthest route out. It would go out around
24 refineries, and I'm sure there would be a lot of stuff
25 running on this. So it would be dangerous.

1 We have no way whatsoever to put out a
2 fire. We depend on Manvel to back us up, and they are
3 busy in the county themselves. I'm not speaking of the
4 fire department, but I think this would be a stretch
5 thinking they could do anything to a major truck fire or
6 something out there carrying chemicals from one of these
7 refineries. So I think in a less dense area would be a
8 huge plus.

9 And with that, I'd like to give y'all
10 tonight a resolution, No. 2001; and I'll read a little
11 of this. It is: WHEREAS, the City of Iowa Colony may
12 be on the proposed route of a new traffic artery to be
13 named the Grand Parkway; and WHEREAS, the City of Iowa
14 Colony is extremely concerned that a major thoroughfare
15 such as the Grand Parkway will disturb land use patterns
16 in Iowa Colony; and WHEREAS, the city council believes
17 that a major thoroughfare such as the Grand Parkway
18 would degrade the rural quality of life in Iowa Colony.

19 This was passed with a majority vote in
20 our city council, and there was no one in our council
21 that night that opposed this. So I hope you'll take
22 that into consideration.

23 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Mayor Wall.

24 We have Commissioner Clawson that would
25 like to speak.

1 COMMISSIONER CLAWSON: I want to thank
2 you folks for being here tonight and giving the local
3 folks an opportunity to express their opinion. I think
4 that's something that we should do more often. And I --
5 I'm also here in support of the most southern route of
6 this Parkway.

7 We have approximately a hundred thousand
8 people living in the south end of the county. This
9 could be a very good opportunity for them to get an
10 evacuation route during the hurricane season,
11 especially, or any disaster that might happen.

12 I hope very soon we can scratch the route
13 on County Road 63.

14 The southern route on your plan, if that
15 should be the -- become the most northern route that we
16 would accept, and we will take it more further south
17 than what you have on the plan if we can find a good
18 one.

19 And I do appreciate it.

20 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Commissioner
21 Clawson.

22 Would any of the other elected officials
23 care to speak at this time? If not, we will go to the
24 general public and their comments.

25 The first speaker we have tonight is

1 Judy Myers.

2 MS. MYERS: I'd also like to thank you
3 for holding this hearing and giving us an opportunity to
4 get some information and to speak.

5 As many of you know, my husband and I
6 drafted a petition opposed to the County Road 63 option
7 that many of you have already signed. As we and our
8 neighbors circulated this petition, we found
9 overwhelming objection to the proposed County Road 63
10 route of the Grand Parkway.

11 Here are the reasons for our opposition
12 as stated in the petition: First, the Grand Parkway
13 Association says that on the County Road 63 route, only
14 one home and one mobile home would be relocated. They
15 do not mention the dozens of homes that would have their
16 quality of life destroyed by having a major highway only
17 a few feet from their door. Their environmental survey
18 does not even consider the damage of going right through
19 our nearly hundred-year-old community.

20 Second, at a meeting last year at the
21 Iowa Colony Community Center, the executive director of
22 the Grand Parkway told us the County Road 63 route would
23 have no benefit to us or our community. She said the
24 Grand Parkway benefits real estate developers who want
25 fast access to large tracts of open land. Those of us

1 around Houston. State Highway 6 is being widened just
2 to the north, County Road 1462 is just to the south.

3 We know our area will grow. However, we
4 are committed to having it grow in a way that is
5 consistent with our regional plan and our present
6 lifestyle, that of home sites on acreages.

7 If there is a need for the Grand Parkway
8 to let developers turn big acreages into little lots,
9 let them put the Parkway where those developers want it.

10 We are against the County Road 63 route.
11 If those of you here tonight agree with us, we'd
12 appreciate it if you'd sign the petition. We've also
13 drafted letters you can sign and send in or take them to
14 use as the basis for your own letter. Your signatures
15 are important.

16 The Grand Parkway executive director told
17 us last year that if we don't want this route, we need
18 to tell them. This is the first public meeting since
19 then. So, this is the time to tell them.

20 Our first priority is to have the County
21 Road 63 option rejected.

22 The County Road 60 option affects many
23 fewer people; but I believe, as Commissioner Clawson has
24 just stated, it would be better to have the road even
25 farther south, south of 1462 where there is no road

1 across Brazoria or Fort Bend County. Go far enough
2 south of Brazos Bend to get out of the -- to get the
3 lights out of their way.

4 It would also be better to obtain the
5 right-of-way before the tracts are broken up; the people
6 have saved to buy property, built their homes, decorated
7 and gotten their lawns to grow, made friends and gotten
8 involved in the schools.

9 If this would be too ideal to put the
10 road where it's really needed, at least don't bring it
11 right through Iowa Colony. Thank you.

12 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Ms. Myers.

13 Stephanie -- and I'm sorry, Stephanie.
14 I'm not sure how to pronounce your last name.

15 DR. HRABAR: My name is Hrabar.

16 MS. STERRY: Hrabar.

17 DR. HRABAR: My name is Dr. Stephanie
18 Hrabar. I'm a certified professional geologist,
19 certified fraud examiner specializing in loss
20 prevention; and I'm an independent consulting geologist.

21 So my comments today are really my
22 summary to my client who could not be here.

23 The DEIS is a hoax. The only viable
24 option to the public is the no-build option because the
25 system errors, geological emissions, and deception to

1 the lay public are egregious.

2 The geological omissions include but are
3 not restricted to, one, the failure to use a system's
4 approach that interrelates all the components of the
5 natural environment -- air, land, water, and life -- a
6 requirement of the National Environment Policy Act;

7 Two, failure to discuss natural
8 subsidence and show the location of active faults in the
9 proposed project area. Subsidence is a natural and
10 irreversible process that results in ground elevation
11 changes -- it goes down;

12 Three, the failure to discuss the
13 interrelationship of accelerated subsidence, groundwater
14 pumping, reactivation of faults, and increased flooding
15 of developed areas during major storms;

16 Four, the failure to discuss the
17 interrelations of subsidence, excessive groundwater
18 pumpage, increased flooding, and the number and cost of
19 insurance claims in the proposed project area;

20 Five, the failure to discuss the probable
21 increase in flooding in Fort Bend and Harris Counties as
22 a result of the proposed highway project and accelerated
23 residential and commercial development along the
24 proposed route;

25 Six, the failure to include the impact of

1 NORM, naturally occurring radioactive material, on the
2 site workers; possible relocation of public water supply
3 wells, private water wells, and artificial recharge
4 wells in the proposed project area;

5 Seven, the failure to include all
6 appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies with
7 jurisdictional authority or technical expertise in the
8 review of this project as required by NEPA 1969. And
9 ladies and gentlemen, that means the Harris and Fort
10 Bend subsidence districts and the U.S. Department for
11 Geological Survey for Geohazards and Faults.

12 Regarding environmental equity issues,
13 the DEIS contains no discussion of groundwater
14 contamination under the heading of "Groundwater." This
15 is noteworthy because at present, the State has no
16 regulations or performance measures to monitor the
17 distance or direction that hazardous wastes migrated
18 away from injection or disposal locations. That affects
19 worker safety and environmental equity issues.

20 Under the heading of "Social Impacts and
21 Environmental Equity," the authors of the DEIS do not
22 consider the drinking water quality for homes that use
23 private water wells less than 5 inches in diameter.

24 At present, licensed water-well drillers
25 in Texas have no minimum drinking water standards to

1 meet. That is a significant environmental equity issue.

2 For the above reasons, the public has
3 been deprived of the right to honest services of
4 Federal, State, and local officials. The only viable
5 option at this time is "no build."

6 In fact, investigations by the
7 Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Highway
8 Administration, and Department of Interior may be
9 justified because of the taxpayer monies used to date
10 for the proposed project. In fact, I have seen a fraud
11 audit, not a conventional audit.

12 That concludes my comments.

13 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Dr. Hrabar.

14 Brandt Mannchen.

15 MR. MANNCHEN: My name is Brandt
16 Mannchen, B-R-A-N-D-T M-A-N-N-C-H-E-N; and I'm here
17 this evening representing the Houston Sierra Club. We
18 will be submitting more detailed comments by the
19 July 13th deadline. I'd just like to mention a couple
20 of items this evening.

21 First, a lot of the emphasis on this
22 project is hurricane evacuation; but there's an
23 incomplete analysis with regard to hurricane evacuation.

24 First, there's no discussion about what a
25 hurricane will do to this area so that the public can

1 get some idea of what the scope of the problem is as far
2 as this general area and flooding and that sort of
3 thing;

4 Second, there are no other alternatives
5 that could be used in place of this one for hurricane
6 evacuation evaluated as reasonable alternatives. We
7 find this very strange, and we would encourage that sort
8 of detailed analysis and alternative selection in this
9 particular EIS;

10 And there is no discussion of the roads
11 leading to the Grand Parkway, what will happen to them
12 during a hurricane. If they are flooded, no one's going
13 to get to the Grand Parkway.

14 And so, there's no discussion of a lot of
15 things concerning hurricane evacuation; and that needs
16 to be discussed very carefully because that's one of the
17 purposes of this particular project.

18 Second, right-of-way donations. We're
19 concerned that some folks have said, "We want to donate
20 our right-of-way." And we're concerned that that may
21 bias the process as far as what alternatives will be
22 chosen because, obviously, that would lessen the cost of
23 the proposal; and so, we would like to register that
24 concern.

25 Another concern we have deals with the

1 "preferred alternative" scenario. We have never seen an
2 Environmental Impact Statement where the preferred
3 alternative is chosen and then additional detailed
4 analysis is done only on that alternative and not on the
5 other reasonable alternatives.

6 We feel that under the counsel on
7 environmental qualities regulations dealing with NEPA,
8 National Environmental Policy Act, it's very clear that
9 you must give a similar level of detailed analysis to
10 each reasonable alternative; and we feel like what's
11 been proposed is not appropriate. We feel like it's
12 illegal.

13 Also a lack of alternatives. We have, in
14 our view, one alternative and eight variations to that
15 alternative; and that's to build a big highway.

16 There are other alternatives that were
17 dismissed. We feel like those alternatives in
18 conjunction with several of those alternatives could be
19 reasonable alternatives, but those were never looked at
20 in conjunction with each other.

21 We have additional concerns including air
22 quality. There's only about four pages on air quality,
23 one being a table. Yet, we feel like this Parkway and
24 the secondary development is going to create an awful
25 lot of additional emissions.

1 And, in fact, we feel like it's going to
2 create ozone violations because wherever development has
3 occurred and they put an air monitor there, we found
4 excess ozone emissions above the standard. So, we feel
5 like the air quality analysis is very weak and you need
6 to go back and look at that very extensively.

7 And we'll submit more detailed comments
8 by the 13th. Thank you.

9 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Mr. Mannchen.
10 C.J. Waller.

11 MR. WALLER: Yes. I live on -- off 521
12 immediately north of the proposed -- the proposed route
13 for this Grand Parkway.

14 Our main concern is that this road not be
15 constructed in such a manner as to raise the water level
16 during flood times on my wife's property and her family.
17 They've owned this place for almost a hundred years, and
18 they know that there's a lot of water that comes down in
19 flood time. And that's their main -- that's our main
20 concern. We live there.

21 We really don't care about what somebody
22 does as far as development somewhere else. That's fine.

23 We'd just like to see the thing
24 designed -- if it's going to be put there, we'd like to
25 see it designed in such a way that it would not raise

1 any floodplain elevation on properties upstream because
2 one solution to that is just move the Grand Parkway
3 upstream, you know. You wouldn't have to go but about
4 2 miles, and you'd solve our problem.

5 Or you can move it downstream so that the
6 maximum elevation at the top of the road is Elevation 53
7 so you wouldn't have -- and we wouldn't have a problem,
8 either, at that point.

9 But the -- we know that people need to go
10 places, and they need to evacuate or whatever.

11 We've lived here long enough that we
12 leave a long time ahead of time when we're going to have
13 a storm. We're not worried about the water or anything
14 else. We just lock up everything because we figure that
15 our life is worth more than a few earthly possessions
16 here. So, there is a solution to that evacuation; and
17 we have subscribed to it. Of the family, ain't nobody
18 staying. I mean, we just leave.

19 But really, that's a little comical; but
20 it's serious business with us. We don't want to be
21 flooded, don't want water running through our house. We
22 built above the floodplain to take care of that in
23 compliance with the laws like we're supposed to.

24 So, if you do build it, we're going to
25 look at you very closely when we get a flood. Don't

1 raise the water level.

2 Thank you very much.

3 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Mr. Waller.

4 Nicole Goodman. Nicole Goodman.

5 Michelle Bates. Michelle Bates.

6 Arlene Preble.

7 MS. PREBLE: Good evening, folks. I

8 want to thank you, as the others have, for being here

9 tonight.

10 Mary Kitterman and I showed up at your
11 presentation at the George Ranch way back about a year
12 ago this fall. I think it was in October. And we put
13 in our comments at that time asking you to move this
14 thing south further than this preferred route on County
15 Road 63.

16 Now, there's a number of reasons why
17 people out here are upset about this County Road 63,
18 some of which have been voiced. And one particular
19 thing is that you have to -- you're -- you're only
20 concerning yourself with this segment at this time. But
21 this road is going to have to go somewhere; otherwise,
22 it is going to be a road to nowhere.

23 And if you project this road due east, as
24 other people have said, you're going right through the
25 middle of Iowa Colony; but further than that, if you go

1 farther to the east, you're going to come right into the
2 middle of Alvin. And do you expect to build a bridge
3 over the top of Alvin? No. Really no.

4 Highway 6 is the northern end of Alvin.
5 1462 is essentially the southern end of Alvin.

6 Now, you're going to have to go south at
7 some point; and it would seem to me that it would be
8 better for you-all in the long run to be planning to cut
9 farther south on this Segment C that you're looking at
10 now. Now, that makes sense to me. I don't know whether
11 it does to you.

12 The gentleman that just spoke, right now,
13 the City of Iowa Colony and a lot of citizens out
14 here -- well, not the City but the citizens out here are
15 in the process of fighting with the TNRCC about putting
16 in a Type IV landfill, which incidentally is -- the
17 northern boundary would be on County Road 56 just
18 north -- immediately north of the Darrington prison farm
19 acreage that is on the east side of 521 and it's
20 boundard [sic] on the east by that rice canal and it's
21 boundard [sic] on the west by 521.

22 And I have a name for that landfill if it
23 goes in, and it's Mount Trashmore.

24 And we are concerned about the run-off
25 from this thing already if it does go in. Hopefully, we

1 can defeat it.

2 But this is something that you-all need
3 to consider because there are things -- this is a
4 rapidly developing area. We still haven't got the big,
5 super big subdivisions out here; and I hope they don't
6 come. But sooner or later, these -- all of these open
7 fields out here are going to have houses in them or at
8 least a good many of them.

9 Farther south there is still plenty of
10 room for development, and you-all could cut through
11 where you could come in there and you would have far
12 less people to -- to deal with.

13 This landfill site, incidentally, is
14 supposed to go up to about 120 feet total. It goes down
15 12 feet, and they're looking at it to go up 120 feet.
16 And that's about the size of the Astrodome. And we
17 consider it's going to be taking in over -- by about
18 half of a 500-acre tract -- 180 acres, I think it is.
19 And I think you-all should certainly check into that.

20 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Ms. Preble.

21 Nancy Kaufman.

22 MS. KAUFMAN: Yes, I had a question.
23 Looking at the maps this evening, I did not notice any
24 other alternatives for the Parkway; and I've got some
25 information that suggests turning -- instead of turning

1 south at Lake Worthington -- it's referred to as
2 Option C. Option C would follow the route of the
3 proposed Fort Bend Parkway toll road to the northeast.

4 And all this information is available on
5 the Internet, and that's where I got this from.

6 And I'm wondering why it hasn't been
7 addressed this evening. There's no mention of it on the
8 maps or on any of the paperwork that I've seen here
9 tonight. And I would like to have that addressed, why
10 they cannot be mentioned and discussed. I feel like
11 somebody's withholding information. This is important
12 to us as residents out here, and I'd like to have it
13 addressed.

14 There are 12 reasons listed here for
15 this -- why this is a better option, and I'll read them
16 to you briefly: One, right-of-way is already provided
17 by Sienna Plantation; two, provides an excellent
18 hurricane evacuation road; three, stays out of flood
19 prone areas; four, doesn't encourage building by the
20 George Foundation and Brazos River floodplain property
21 that will cause upstream flooding on the Brazos River;
22 five, preserves the green belt between Lake Worthington
23 and Brazos Bend State Park; six, does not interfere with
24 Brazos Bend State Park watershed; seven, reduces air
25 pollution by putting a limit on urban sprawl; eight,

1 avoids expensive elevated roadways and bridges required
2 for Options A and B to remain dry; nine, has less impact
3 on wetlands and bottom land parkwood forests; ten,
4 preserves the night sky at the George Astronomical
5 Observatory; eleven, does not destroy the rural way of
6 life people have moved out to this country for; and
7 twelve, maintains a higher quality of life for residents
8 who enjoy visiting a viable State park and observatory.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Ms. Kaufman.

11 Now, we had one additional speaker who
12 knows he's going to go past three minutes. So, I'd like
13 to give anybody else an opportunity to speak if they'd
14 like to before Mr. Myers steps up.

15 Yes, sir. Can you come to the
16 microphone, please, so our court reporter can get it on
17 record?

18 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Buddy
19 Williams. I live in Manvel. I don't see why we're
20 going through so much stuff on this study on the Grand
21 Parkway when we've got two contracts held up on
22 Highway 6 that have already been let and whatnot, and
23 another contract is supposed to be over 521 that can't
24 be let because we're held up on account of the wetlands,
25 I understand.

1 Why can't we focus our energy on trying
2 to get what we've already got -- already bought right
3 away, we've already let the contract, why can't we focus
4 our energy on trying to finish what we've already
5 started? That contract's been held up now, what, four,
6 five months? And really, most people don't know why.

7 Well, we -- we're not trying to stop
8 development, but we don't want to just keep on buying
9 land and nothing happening. It's costing taxpayers of
10 Texas a bunch of money on Highway 6. I would like to
11 see that cleared up, and I understand it's because of
12 wetlands. I don't know.

13 But I'd like to see Highway 6 finished
14 before we even start on another part of the work.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. STERRY: Thank you, sir.

17 Is there anybody else who'd like to
18 speak.

19 MS. UNDERWOOD: I thought that I signed
20 up to speak. I'm Frances Underwood. Perhaps I didn't,
21 and I'm sorry. Thank you-all for having us here
22 tonight.

23 On the way in when I signed in,
24 Mrs. Schenke indicated that she had already received my
25 letter, remembered me; and I was impressed by that.

1 I -- I actually wrote two letters and just wanted to
2 make sure that I was on record that both were in with
3 these formal comments.

4 One was addressing an issue that had
5 already been covered earlier about the potential of
6 flooding along the Brazos River on the east of the
7 Brazos River and north of Darrington prison farm.

8 We are knowing, as families who live
9 there, that we have only one opportunity to construct
10 that portion of the road in a manner that does not
11 disrupt the natural flow of water during flooding
12 events. And I sent a letter to that effect, and I'm
13 assuming it's there.

14 The second letter that I sent, which I
15 haven't heard anyone mention tonight, is regarding a
16 tract of land approximately 370 acres, also to the east
17 of the Brazos River but -- and to the north of
18 Darrington prison farm but to the west -- immediately to
19 the west of Highway 521. I'm sure that that's a letter
20 that Mrs. Schenke was referring to.

21 I also wanted it to be on the record that
22 you'll be receiving a letter out of Judge John Wiley's
23 office regarding the historical value of that property.

24 It's the contention of my family that the
25 Parkway needs to stay on State property. As it crosses

1 the Brazos River, it's on State property. There's no
2 need to cut through that tract of land and effectively
3 ruin that tract of land, disturbing it.

4 As Mrs. Schenke also had pointed out to
5 me on a visit to the Parkway office, there's some woods
6 there -- about 50 or 60 acres of some woods and some
7 wetlands. And I know that in the grand scheme of things
8 that that seems like a small amount, but staying on
9 State property would leave those undisturbed. There are
10 no wetlands on State property. Those were drained years
11 ago for obvious reasons and stripped of hardwoods, which
12 makes that, in our opinion, the more viable option and
13 we would request that -- that the Grand Parkway abandon
14 any more consideration of going through that 370-acre of
15 tract of land. Thank you.

16 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Ms. Underwood.

17 Is there anybody else who would like to
18 speak?

19 Mr. Myers.

20 MR. MYERS: I also would like to thank
21 you for the opportunity to speak tonight; and Robin, I
22 would like to thank you especially. I was feeling
23 constrained by this three-minute time limit. I
24 appreciate your leniency.

25 Again, I would like to express my general

1 distaste for that limit because I think we all came here
2 tonight expecting a public hearing and the public being
3 allowed to speak; and I really feel like the
4 three-minute limit is something that should not
5 constrain us.

6 Again, I am Denny Myers. My wife Judy
7 spoke to you earlier. She told you that we were the
8 ones that put this petition together against the Grand
9 Parkway's County Road 63 route, and she said that we've
10 begun circulating a petition throughout our community.

11 And I must tell you, all the response has
12 been overwhelming against the County Road 63
13 alternative.

14 I want to tell you a little bit about how
15 we found out we were affected by the Grand Parkway. We
16 received a letter in March of '99 in the mail from a
17 surveyor from some of the folks that I think have been
18 represented here tonight, from PBSJ, asking for
19 permission to come on to our property to survey for a
20 Grand Parkway right-of-way.

21 I called a number of our neighbors and
22 asked them if they knew anything about this. Very few
23 of them had not heard a word about it -- very few heard
24 anything about it. There were a few like us that had
25 received the letter. Most had heard nothing.

1 I then called the Grand Parkway
2 requesting a map showing the proposed route. A few days
3 later, I received a map from the Grand Parkway. I
4 called the surveyor. I kind of scratched my head over
5 that map. I looked at the county road numbers and so
6 forth. I called the surveyor and described the map to
7 him.

8 His comment to me was, "Where did you get
9 that? That is wrong."

10 So the surveyor, after several requests,
11 sent me a map showing the proposed route across our
12 property.

13 My thought at this point was, "Does
14 anyone really know what's going on?"

15 So, I set out to get some more
16 information. Of course, in matters like these, you want
17 some legal advice; and being a cheapskate like I am, I
18 sought out at first some free advise.

19 I work for an independent oil company,
20 North Central Oil; and we have an attorney on staff.
21 Our guy's name is Rob MacMillian. He's a friend of
22 mine. So I walked down to Rob's office one day.

23 I said, "Rob, this Grand Parkway outfit
24 is wanting to survey for a road across our property and
25 through the heart of our neighborhood."

1 Rob said to me -- he kind of leaned back
2 in his chair and rolled his eyes and said, "Let me tell
3 you about the Grand Parkway. The Grand Parkway is a
4 private organization funded by a bunch of real estate
5 developers. They want to open up the countryside to
6 subdivisions. Do not kid yourself about their
7 propaganda showing scenic roadways and them wanting to
8 help the current residents. They are in this for one
9 reason: So they can make money."

10 I thought those were interesting
11 comments, but Rob had more to say.

12 He said, "I made the mistake of buying a
13 house that backs up to the Grand Parkway in Cinco Ranch
14 in Katy." He said, "I have seen a steady increase in
15 traffic at all hours, especially lots more big trucks at
16 all kinds of hours." He said, "So, another thing" -- he
17 was kind of philosophizing here -- "but it seems to me
18 that the Parkway's development is very haphazard. It's
19 quite hit-and-miss; and if there is a plan, it must be a
20 poor one."

21 And he continued to expand. He said he
22 didn't agree with the Grand Parkway about the need for
23 more roadways right now, supposedly based on projected
24 growth rates for Houston. And he said that he felt
25 like, in his opinion, what should be done -- as has been

1 stated earlier tonight -- is to improve traffic flow in
2 other areas such as expanding existing key arteries.

3 And his other comment to our conversation
4 was this: He said, "Frankly, Denny, I'm thinking about
5 selling my home; that is, if I can get anything for it."

6 So I want the people here tonight to hear
7 the words from someone who has had the pleasure of
8 living next to the existing Grand Parkway at Katy.

9 Let's talk for a minute about the need
10 for a new Parkway in our community, and let's compare it
11 to other segments of a proposed outer loop around
12 Houston.

13 For those of us -- and I think that's
14 about everybody here -- familiar with Houston, we're all
15 aware of Houston's expansion in different directions
16 from Houston.

17 I believe you would all agree that
18 Houston's growth to the west and northwest has, for many
19 years, outstretched the growth towards us to the south.

20 Tomball and Katy are virtually suburbs to
21 Houston and I've got a number of colleagues that live in
22 that direction and I'm somewhat familiar with them.

23 Let's see what happened to the Grand
24 Parkway's planned segment to the Northwest of Houston
25 between I-10 and I-45. Again, this is an area growing

1 much more rapidly than we are; and that's been the case
2 for many years.

3 I want to cite an article from the
4 HOUSTON CHRONICLE -- I have the article here for any of
5 you that would like to see it -- dated April 3rd, 1999,
6 just a little over a year ago. The article is titled
7 "Parkway Toll is Too Steep for Texas."

8 To summarize, it says that traffic
9 studies done for this Northwest segment did not show
10 enough traffic volume to support a new road in that
11 area.

12 The article goes on to quote a Grand
13 Parkway opponent, James Blackburn, an environmental
14 attorney. He is quoted as saying, quote, "The low
15 traffic numbers prove the road is not about congestion
16 relief for Houston as backers emphasized. It is a road
17 intended to develop property, not relieve congestion."

18 Blackburn said that the Parkway was meant
19 to relieve existing congestion by diverting traffic
20 around Houston, it should have access to the major
21 freeways.

22 Well, it turns out the way they have it
23 planned, there was an exit proposed for about 2.3 miles.

24 So, the State Transportation officials in
25 Harris County said no last year, barely a year ago, to

1 the Grand Parkway's northwest segment. Traffic studies
2 could not support a northwest segment for the busiest,
3 fastest growing quarter segment away from Houston.

4 Now they want us to believe it makes
5 sense for us, where our growth is much slower, to
6 support a new roadway in our area.

7 Does that really make sense?

8 Judy told you some of the reasons we're
9 opposing the County Road 63 route. I'd like to tell you
10 what we've done so far.

11 First of all, Judy and I had a personal
12 meeting last year -- and we thank Diane Schenke for that
13 meeting -- on April the 30th of '99.

14 She told us at that time that one of the
15 Grand Parkway's goals was to disrupt as few people as
16 possible.

17 The next thing we did was we attended a
18 meeting at Iowa Colony City Hall on April the 19th of
19 last year, as many of you-all here did.

20 When Diane Schenke made her presentation,
21 we again expressed our opposition to County Road 63.

22 Another thing we've done, we also
23 contacted both Commissioner Clawson's office and
24 Judge Wiley's office expressing our opposition. And
25 then just last April the 19th, several of us, a number

1 of people in this room, met with Judge Wiley down in
2 Angleton to express our opposition to the County Road
3 63. Then several of us met with Commissioner Clawson to
4 express our opposition.

5 And just last week, we sent letters to
6 our county judge and our county commissioner expressing
7 our opposition, and we are now circulating the
8 petition -- the petition stating the opposition to the
9 County Road 63 route.

10 I want to show you a map we put together.
11 You've seen the Grand Parkway's map. We've got a
12 U.S.G.S. topographic map which shows -- this is kind of
13 small scale, but I hope you can see the main points.
14 This is why I wish I could stand up there.

15 MS. STERRY: Let me hold that for you.

16 MR. MYERS: Okay. This is the U.S.G.S.
17 topographic map. About 2 and a half inches here is
18 1 mile on the scale. And this shows the roads as well
19 as the geologic features and some culture features.
20 There are a few homes there but only a few.

21 The map was done -- the map was done in
22 '63 and the photo was revised from aerial photographs in
23 '74.

24 That red line you see on that map shows a
25 proposal -- that red line you see right there is the

1 proposed County Road 63 route between FM 521 and 288.

2 The red triangles you see are some of the
3 homes -- and yours may be on there -- very near the
4 proposed route. Conversely, this route, you see one
5 green triangle right down there. There are no homes on
6 County Road 60, 2 miles west of 288. But the Grand
7 Parkway -- I think I'm right on this -- Diane, you may
8 want to correct me on this.

9 The Grand Parkway map we looked at in the
10 Grand Parkway office showed a blue star right there
11 where the green triangle is -- it was my recollection --
12 indicating a historical site.

13 Well, folks, that house has a cattle
14 feeder in the front road. It's an abandoned house. It
15 has been for a number of years, and I guess they would
16 be disrupting the cows there.

17 None of the homes along there, none of
18 those homes with the red triangles were cited on the map
19 from the GPA.

20 I want to show both the Grand Parkway and
21 the TxDOT folks here tonight my house. You were
22 concerned -- you were concerned about this house. This
23 is my house (indicating). I'm concerned about that
24 house. I don't want your freeway in my backyard.

25 And I can say the same for Mr. Nato's

1 house, Mr. Thompson's house, the Vans' house, and all of
2 our other neighbors that we don't want your freeway in
3 our backyard or our property.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MS. STERRY: Thank you, Mr. Myers. Is
6 there anybody else who would like to comment tonight?

7 If not, I'd like to thank each and every
8 one of you for your comments tonight. Your comments
9 will be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting,
10 and they will be part of the official record of the
11 completed EIS.

12 Again, if you would like to comment in
13 writing, you may do so by completing a written comment
14 form. The forms may be completed tonight; or you may
15 mail them to us by July 13th, 2000. If you want to mail
16 your comments, the address is available at the
17 registration table.

18 We anticipate holding a public workshop
19 this fall to announce the selection of the preferred
20 alternative. Newsletters will be mailed prior to the
21 workshop to inform individuals of exact time and
22 location of that workshop. If you are not on the
23 mailing list and would like to be included on it, please
24 make sure that you signed in at this meeting. All
25 individuals that have signed in at this meeting will be

1 added to the mailing list.

2 Again, thank you for your attendance and
3 input. Be careful driving home and good night.

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1 STATE OF TEXAS

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3 I, Minnie Cadena-Meche, a Certified Shorthand
4 Reporter in and for the State of Texas, do hereby
5 certify that the above and foregoing contains a true and
6 correct transcription of all portions of the
7 above-referenced public hearing to be included in the
8 transcript of said hearing, and were reported by me.

9 Given under my hand and seal of office on the
10 20th day of June, 2000.

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12

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14 Minnie Cadena-Meche, CSR, RPR
15 CSR No. 5849; Expiration: 12-31-00
2013 Stapleton Drive
Friendswood, Texas 77546

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