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GRAND PARKWAY SEGMENT C  
PUBLIC HEARING for  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

PUBLIC MEETING

JUNE 13, 1998

AT

7:00 P.M.

DICKINSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

7110 GREATWOOD PARKWAY

SUGAR LAND, TEXAS

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1                   MR. COOPER: On behalf of the Texas  
2 Department of Transportation and the Grand Parkway  
3 Association, I would like to welcome each one of you here  
4 tonight to this public hearing for the Segment C of the  
5 Grand Parkway. Segment C of the Grand Parkway extends  
6 from U.S. 59 in Fort Bend County to State Highway 288 in  
7 Brazoria County.

8                   My name is Dr. Stanley Cooper. I'm with the  
9 Houston district of the Texas Department of  
10 Transportation. This is also known as TxDOT. TxDOT has  
11 the responsibility of planning, designing, construction  
12 and maintenance of state highways in Texas. It is our  
13 responsibility under a variety of federal laws, including  
14 the National Environmental Policy Act to prepare an  
15 Environmental Impact Statement, commonly referred to as an  
16 EIS, to examine the need for a project and the impacts of  
17 any transportation improvements.

18                   The EIS must address a variety of  
19 alternatives to meet the transportation -- transportation  
20 needs of this area. Tonight we will be presenting the  
21 findings of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or  
22 DEIS, for Segment C of the Grand Parkway. The preparation  
23 of the DEIS is the responsibility of TxDOT and the Federal  
24 Highway Administration. The DEIS being presented tonight  
25 does not include the selection of a preferred alternative.

1 It examines the environmental consequences of several  
2 alternatives, including the no-build alternative. A  
3 preferred alternative will be selected once comments from  
4 the public and from resource agencies are received and  
5 considered.

6           The purpose for tonight's public hearing is  
7 to present the findings of the DEIS and more importantly  
8 to seek public comments on the proposed action and work  
9 performed to date. Although approval of the DEIS by the  
10 Federal Highway Administration cleared the way for  
11 tonight's meeting, it in no way represents a final  
12 approval of Segment C or a proposed route. All comments  
13 received tonight, as well as written comments, postmarked  
14 by July 13th, 2000, will be included in the official  
15 public hearing record and will be addressed in the Final  
16 Environmental Impact Statement, or FEIS.

17           The DEIS was circulated to numerous state  
18 and federal resource agencies on May 1, 2000. It has also  
19 been made available to the public through placement at  
20 TxDOT's Houston district office, public libraries within  
21 the study area and the Grand Parkway Association office.  
22 Comments to the DEIS must also be postmarked by July 13th,  
23 2000.

24           This public hearing is being held pursuant  
25 to federal rules and regulations implementing the National

1 Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and governing the  
2 development of Environmental Impact Statements for  
3 transportation improvements. This public hearing is being  
4 recorded by a certified court reporter. This is one of  
5 two locations for public hearings for Segment C of the  
6 Grand Parkway tonight. This same presentation is being  
7 made now in Brazoria County.

8                   Before we begin our technical presentations,  
9 I'd like to make a few announcements. First, I want to  
10 thank all of you for being here tonight to participate in  
11 this public hearing. We appreciate your interest and we  
12 welcome you -- your comments later on this evening. We'd  
13 also like to thank the Dickinson Elementary School for  
14 allowing us to be here tonight.

15                   Now, I trust you noticed the registration  
16 table out front as you came in. If you have not already  
17 done so, please register out at the table. This allows us  
18 to keep track of participation in the public hearings and  
19 it gives you an opportunity to be added to the mail-out  
20 list for the newsletters.

21                   You will have an opportunity to make  
22 comments tonight. Your comments are welcome with respect  
23 to any aspect of the project, including but not limited to  
24 the project's purpose and need, the project alternatives,  
25 the criteria for screening alternatives, the project's

1 environmental and physical constraints. You can make your  
2 comments in two different ways, either orally or written.

3           To make oral comments, you need to have  
4 completed a speaker registration card -- unfortunately, I  
5 don't have one. They're small 2-by-3 cards that were  
6 handed out at the registration table. If you don't have  
7 any of those cards, if you could raise your hands, we'll  
8 try to have someone bring some in and give them to you, if  
9 you would like to speak. Does anyone at this point want a  
10 speaker registration card?

11           We have a court reporter here tonight to  
12 make a record of your oral comments that will go into our  
13 public hearing record. The format for making oral  
14 comments is simple. We will call on those of you who have  
15 completed the speaker request cards in the order in which  
16 the cards were received. You will make your comments at  
17 the microphone located in the center aisle. We ask that  
18 you limit your comments to three minutes so that everyone  
19 has a chance to speak. A timer will be used to time --  
20 limit each speaker to three minutes. Also, please do not  
21 repeat comments that other commenters have already given.  
22 That will help us to move along and give everyone a chance  
23 to speak.

24           We request that you limit your comments both  
25 for and against to issues related to Segment C of the

1 Grand Parkway. We will not respond to your comments  
2 during the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to  
3 receive your input, your comments on issues that should be  
4 addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement. Each of  
5 your comments will be addressed or answered in the Final  
6 Environmental Impact Statement. If you would like to  
7 comment but do not wish to present oral comments tonight  
8 or if you wish to comment in more detail, you may submit a  
9 written comment. Written comments will be considered  
10 equally with oral comments. There are comment forms  
11 provided at the table in the back. You can complete these  
12 forms and leave them in the box at the back or you can  
13 mail them to us and the address is on the form. If you  
14 want to mail in your comments, the comments must be mailed  
15 in by July 13th. We also have the address available at  
16 the registration table.

17                   At this time I would like to recognize some  
18 of the members of the community who are here tonight in  
19 their official capacities. We have Councilperson Lee Hedt  
20 of the City of Needville. If you could, raise your hand  
21 or stand up so we can recognize you, there.

22                   We have Councilperson Harriett Karnei from  
23 the City of Needville. We have Councilperson Carol  
24 Grubles from the town of Thompsons. We have Daisy  
25 Mitchell who is a representative of our new representative

1 Dora Olivo. Right here.

2 Jim Hemingway, who is the president of the  
3 Waterbrook Homeowners' Association. We have the new  
4 County Commissioner Tom Stavinoha.

5 We have Freddie Newsome, Jr., the mayor of  
6 Thompsons; and Jim Gonzales a commissioner from the city  
7 of Richmond. Back in the back.

8 Are there any other public officials that we  
9 did not get on this list?

10 Okay. Thank you.

11 I also want to introduce the people sitting  
12 up at the front here with me tonight. These individuals  
13 are part of the study team responsible for preparing the  
14 DEIS for Segment C of the Grand Parkway Association. From  
15 the Grand Parkway Association we have David Gornet on the  
16 end. With Brown & Gay Engineers, we have Chris Cotter;  
17 and with PBS&J, we have Kristie Denton.

18 I'd like to briefly explain the agenda for  
19 tonight's meeting. First David Gornet from the Grand  
20 Parkway Association will provide an overview of the Grand  
21 Parkway Association, history of the project and the  
22 purpose and need for the project. Next, Chris Cotter of  
23 Brown & Gay Engineers will describe the various  
24 alternatives that have been studied. Next Kristie Denton  
25 of PBS&J will provide an overview of the environmental

1 consequences of each of the representative alternatives.  
2 Next, I will provide an overview of TxDOT's right-of-way  
3 acquisition and relocation policies. After these  
4 presentations we'll take a 15-minute break so you may  
5 view the displays located at the back and along the sides  
6 and it'll give you a chance to ask more questions of the  
7 individuals on the study team.

8                   Also, if you would like to fill out the  
9 speaker request forms, cards, they are available at the  
10 registration table and you can fill them out then and turn  
11 them in.

12                   I'm now going to turn the presentation over  
13 to David Gornet with the Grand Parkway Association. David  
14 will provide an overview of the Grand Parkway Association,  
15 the history of the project and the purpose and need for  
16 the project.

17                   MR. GORNET: Thank you, Stan.

18                   One note about the cards, they may have run  
19 out of those cards; and she will be starting a list out at  
20 the registration table. So, if you will -- if you wish to  
21 make public comments, please come -- come see her out here  
22 at the registration period -- during the break period and  
23 sign up to speak.

24                   Again, my name is David Gornet. I'm with  
25 the Grand Parkway Association. I will present a quick

1 overview of the project. First of all, the Grand Parkway  
2 Association is a transportation corporation charged with  
3 locating -- working with local governments, landowners and  
4 TxDOT to build a third outer loop around Houston. The  
5 Grand Parkway Association accomplishes this through  
6 partnerships with TxDOT and local governments. In the  
7 case of Segment C through Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties,  
8 TxDOT, Fort Bend County and Brazoria County -- adjust this  
9 a little bit here -- are funding the engineering, design  
10 and environmental studies that Grand Parkway Association  
11 oversees. TxDOT will be responsible for the construction  
12 and maintenance of the highway.

13                   The Grand Parkway is also known as State  
14 Highway 99. It will form an approximately 170-mile  
15 circumferential route around the Houston metropolitan  
16 area. It will provide access to the radial freeways and  
17 it will serve as a third loop at a distance of  
18 approximately 20 to 30 miles from the downtown Houston  
19 area similar to Beltway 8 or State Highway 610 -- sorry --  
20 Interstate Highway 610.

21                   The Grand Parkway is proposed to be  
22 constructed as a landscaped and controlled-access parkway  
23 that will typically not have frontage road. Frontage  
24 roads will be constructed only where they are necessary to  
25 provide access at interchanges or where they are required

1 to continue providing access to adjacent properties. For  
2 planning and design purposes, the Grand Parkway has been  
3 divided into nine segments. These segments have been  
4 identified as Segments A through I. We're here tonight to  
5 discuss Segment C which traverses from U.S. 59 south to  
6 State Highway 288 in Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties.

7                   The Congress of the United States has  
8 determined that it is acceptable to study the Grand  
9 Parkway on a segment-by-segment basis. The Department of  
10 Transportation Appropriations Bill adopted in July of 1993  
11 specifically instructed the Federal Highway Administration  
12 to prepare Environmental Impact Statements for the Grand  
13 Parkway on a segment-by-segment basis. Each segment of  
14 the Grand Parkway that is to be studied must have  
15 independent utility, that is each segment must constitute  
16 a complete and independently justifiable project without  
17 reliance on another segment to make a usable piece of  
18 freeway.

19                   During development of the Draft  
20 Environmental Impact Statement for Segment C, the purpose  
21 and need of Segment C has been documented. Segment C's  
22 purpose and need has two components. The first component  
23 of the purpose and need is for Segment C to improve  
24 mobility and to relieve local congestion, which has  
25 resulted from high population growth, increased

1 residential development and increased commercial  
2 development within and adjacent to the study area. Also  
3 this facility is needed to relieve regional congestion  
4 which has resulted from increasing regional development  
5 associated with strong Houston, Texas and U.S. economies  
6 throughout the 1990s.

7                   The second component of the purpose and need  
8 for Segment C is to provide additional capacity for  
9 hurricane evacuation for the southern portion of Houston  
10 prior to and during a hurricane. Current State Highway  
11 288 serves as the main hurricane evacuation route for  
12 Brazoria County. Similarly Interstate 45 and State  
13 Highway 6 serve as the main highway evacuation routes for  
14 Galveston County. The evacuation adequacy of these routes  
15 has been questioned because they lead traffic into  
16 congested Houston metropolitan area.

17                   That concludes my brief portion of the  
18 presentation. I'm now going to turn the presentation over  
19 to Chris Cotter with Brown & Gay Engineers and he will  
20 discuss the alternatives considered for Segment C.

21                   MR. COTTER: Thank you, David.

22                   Our study team along with the Grand Parkway  
23 Association, TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration  
24 has been preparing the DEIS that we're presenting to you  
25 here tonight ever since our last public workshop held in

1 October of 1998. At that public workshop we presented an  
2 overview of constraints in the study area and a large  
3 group of alternative corridors. Since that workshop,  
4 we've been performing environmental field investigations  
5 within the alternative corridors.

6           As a result of these investigations, we have  
7 eliminated many of the corridors from consideration due to  
8 various impacts. What remains today is a group of eight  
9 representative alternatives which we will be presenting  
10 tonight and are described in detail in the DEIS.

11           Before discussion of the eight  
12 representative alternative corridors, I want to review the  
13 study process we have followed that resulted in the eight  
14 representative alternatives which remain for  
15 consideration. The study is being performed in three  
16 phases. At this point in time, we are near the end of  
17 Phase II. Phase I included an evaluation and screening of  
18 all alternatives. Phase II included a more detailed  
19 evaluation and screening of a smaller group of  
20 alternatives. Phase III will include a detailed  
21 evaluation of the preferred alternative.

22           In early 1998 we began to study Segment C.  
23 Several public meetings have been held for Segment C since  
24 that time. On March 5th of '98 a meeting was held with  
25 transportation agencies and counties to talk about the

1 need for this facility. Also on that same day, March 5th,  
2 1998, another meeting was held with resource agencies to  
3 discuss impacts to Brazos Bend State Park and potential  
4 mitigation alternatives.

5           On April 25th, 1998, an open house was held  
6 for everyone, although environmental interest groups were  
7 specifically invited. On April 27th, 1998, an open house  
8 was held for all citizens where all citizens were invited.  
9 On August 20th, 1998, a public scoping meeting for Segment  
10 C was held which included a presentation of the project  
11 study area, the study process and constraints within the  
12 study area. And then finally on October 27th, 1998, a  
13 public workshop for Segment C was held that included  
14 exhibits that showed all alternative corridors developed  
15 by the study team.

16           A key element of this process has been the  
17 criteria used in evaluating and eliminating alternatives.  
18 All alternatives have been evaluated based upon criteria  
19 stipulated by NEPA, National Environment Policy Act, and  
20 in ISTEA, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency  
21 Act. These include natural environment, human  
22 environment, mobility, investment, engineering and other  
23 criteria identified during the study process.

24           Initially, per the requirements of NEPA, the  
25 study team considered a large range of mode alternatives

1 to meet the purpose and need for the facility. As you  
2 recall, David mentioned that the purpose of the proposed  
3 facility is regional congestion relief, local congestion  
4 relief and hurricane evacuation capacity. Several mode  
5 alternatives listed on this slide were considered and  
6 eliminated because they did not adequately meet the  
7 purpose of the project.

8                   First of all, transportation system  
9 management, or TSM, alternatives are those actions which  
10 maximize the efficiency of the present roadway system.  
11 Two examples of TSM alternatives are park-and-ride lots  
12 and traffic signal coordination.

13                   Another alternative that was eliminated  
14 were -- was traffic demand management, or TDM, measures.  
15 TDM measures consist of behavioral changes to commuters'  
16 travel habits which result in fewer vehicles during the  
17 peak hours on the roadway. These measures, such as car  
18 pooling and telecommuting, are beneficial but do not  
19 completely meet the purpose of this proposed facility.

20                   Other alternatives which were eliminated  
21 because they did not fully meet the purpose for this  
22 proposed facility include HOV lanes, rail transit, bus  
23 transit, bicycle paths, bicycle lanes, pedestrian  
24 facilities, added capacity to existing roadways and new  
25 arterial roadways.

1                   The correct mode alternative for a  
2 transportation facility in the study area is a new  
3 location controlled-access highway. This type of facility  
4 will best satisfy the purpose and need of the project and  
5 that is congestion relief, increased local and regional  
6 mobility and increased capacity for hurricane evacuation  
7 needs.

8                   The study area is shown on this slide. Key  
9 features of the study area are the George Ranch, Lake  
10 Worthington, Thompsons Oil Field, Brazos Bend State Park,  
11 the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Darrington Unit.  
12 At the beginning of Phase I, a study team identified all  
13 known constraints from recorded data bases and through  
14 site visits via public rights-of-way. All the constraints  
15 are shown on the large exhibits in the back of the room.

16                   During Phase I the study team developed  
17 alternatives based upon input from the local officials and  
18 the public. The alternatives shown here -- the  
19 alternatives shown here are shown in more detail again on  
20 the exhibits in the back of the room. The study team  
21 reduced this group of alternatives to a group of  
22 reasonable alternatives by eliminating several based upon  
23 impacts quantified during Phase I.

24                   Segment B2, highlighted here in blue, was  
25 eliminated because of impacts to forested wetlands and

1 prairie vegetative communities. Segment E1 was eliminated  
2 because of impacts to the historic community of Crabb.  
3 Segment F1 and two connecting segments were eliminated  
4 because of impacts to the potential historic structures on  
5 the George Ranch and because of its close proximity to the  
6 George Ranch Historical Park.

7                   Segment A7 was eliminated because of impacts  
8 to forested and non-forested wetlands, Thompsons Oil  
9 Field, floodplains and nonconformity with local planning.  
10 Segment M1 was eliminated because of impacts to  
11 Schlumberger's Perforating and Testing Center. Segment B8  
12 and its connecting segments to State Highway 288 were  
13 eliminated because of impacts to the dark skies south of  
14 George Observatory at Brazos Bend State Park, impacts to  
15 the historic plantations in the vicinity of China Grove  
16 and Bonney, and impacts to commercial and residential  
17 properties along F.M. 1462 and in the vicinity of  
18 Rosharon.

19                   The result was a group of alternatives that  
20 the study team termed as reason -- reasonable  
21 alternatives. These were the alternatives to be studied  
22 in greater detail in Phase II. During Phase II the study  
23 team performed nondestructive environmental fielding  
24 investigations within the reasonable alternative corridors  
25 to better identify and quantify the environmental

1 consequences of each of the reasonable alternatives. As  
2 the study team began to document the environmental  
3 consequences of each of these reasonable alternatives in  
4 the DEIS, TxDOT's environmental affairs division in Austin  
5 asked the study team to reevaluate and screen the group of  
6 reasonable alternatives to a smaller group of alternatives  
7 for discussion in the DEIS.

8                   In the screening of these reasonable  
9 alternatives, the study team found three impacts that  
10 resulted in the elimination of additional alternatives.  
11 Segment D1, highlighted here in blue, was eliminated due  
12 to rapid development in the northern portion of the study  
13 area. The new development, which occurred after selection  
14 of the reasonable alternatives, included 29 single-family,  
15 site-built homes that would be impacted by Segment D1.  
16 This development was platted after the study commenced in  
17 '98. Some of these 29 homes exist today and some are  
18 currently under construction.

19                   Segment A4 and two connecting segments were  
20 eliminated because of impacts to the George Ranch Historic  
21 Park. The George Ranch Historic Park overlooks Smithers  
22 Lake. Segment A4 would obstruct the view shed to the east  
23 of the park on to the lake.

24                   Segments G3, G4, H1 and J2 were eliminated  
25 because of impacts to a bald eagle's nest. The most

1 significant discovery of the field investigations during  
2 Phase II was the bald eagle's nest. The bald eagle is  
3 currently a federally listed threatened species. Their  
4 nests are protected by primary and secondary management  
5 zones. The zones can restrict certain types of activity  
6 within their vicinity. These zones caused the elimination  
7 of the three southern routes.

8                   The elimination of these three alternatives  
9 left only one alternative in the middle portion of the  
10 study area. In order to maintain a southern alternative  
11 through the middle portion of the study area, the study  
12 team created a new segment, Segment T1 which stayed an  
13 acceptable distance away from the eagle's nest. Also the  
14 elimination of Segments D1 and A4 left only one  
15 alternative in the northern portion of the study area.  
16 Similarly, the study team developed a new segment, Segment  
17 S1, to provide for a second alternative in the northern  
18 portion of the study area.

19                   The second screening process that I've  
20 described to you resulted in eight remaining  
21 representative alternatives, eight remaining  
22 representative alternatives. The eight shown on this  
23 slide are the eight that are shown on the exhibits in the  
24 back of the room in yellow.

25                   This screening process was approved by

1 TxDOT's environmental affairs division and the Federal  
2 Highway Administration in August of 1999. These eight  
3 representative alternatives remain and they are described  
4 in detail, along with the no-build alternative, in the  
5 DEIS.

6                   This concludes my portion of the  
7 presentation. I'm now going to turn the presentation over  
8 to Kristie Denton of our study team. Kristie will discuss  
9 the environmental consequences of the eight remaining  
10 representative alternatives.

11                   MS. DENTON: Actually, first I'd like to  
12 make a small correction to something Chris mentioned  
13 earlier. An open house that was held for everyone,  
14 although the environmental interest groups were  
15 specifically invited, I think he said that that occurred  
16 on April 25th. It occurred on April 22nd.

17                   I would now like to focus on the  
18 environmental issues associated with this project. As  
19 mentioned earlier, the National Environmental Policy Act,  
20 or NEPA, places a great deal of importance on public  
21 participation. Your presence here tonight is essential to  
22 the NEPA process and we appreciate your interest and  
23 involvement. The Final Environmental Impact Statement  
24 will document and respond to all of your comments, along  
25 with those of the various agencies involved. If changes

1 to the project design or alternatives are determined  
2 necessary, as a result of the public's involvement and  
3 DEIS review processes, those changes will be addressed in  
4 the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

5           I would like to draw your attention to the  
6 exhibits and handouts that we have in the room here  
7 tonight and encourage each of you to take a good look at  
8 them and get familiar with the information that's  
9 displayed. This -- this slide is a table from Section 4  
10 of the DEIS that quantitatively summarizes the key impacts  
11 for each alternative. This chart, along with copies of  
12 the DEIS, are on display and available for review in the  
13 back of the room.

14           Rather than repeating these quantified  
15 impacts for each alternative now, I would like to give you  
16 a brief overview of some of the main environmental issues.  
17 While developing and screening alternatives, environmental  
18 impacts were either avoided or minimized to the maximum  
19 extent practicable. Impacts were measured within a 300-  
20 to 400-foot wide right-of-way footprint for each  
21 representative alternative using secondary data sources as  
22 well as extensive field research.

23           There are two major ecological issues that  
24 warrant explicit mention. The first is forested wetland  
25 impacts and the second is protected species.

1                   The representative alternatives that have  
2 been carried through Phase II require a decision as to  
3 whether preferred alternatives will impact forested  
4 wetlands in Columbia Bottomland forest in the Rabbs  
5 Bayou-Big Creek corridor. None of the representative  
6 alternatives completely avoids impacts to forested  
7 wetlands. However, each representative alternative  
8 alignment was moved around within the thousand-foot  
9 corridor during Phase I in order to minimize wetland  
10 impacts, the resulting representative alternative impacts  
11 between 25.3 and 67.2 acres of wetlands. Unavoid --  
12 unavoidable impacts to wetlands will be specifically  
13 addressed in the final EIS pending a selection of a  
14 preferred alternative and the development of a  
15 compensatory wetland mitigation plan.

16                   Also, a determination must be made as to  
17 whether the preferred alternative, when chosen, would  
18 encroach on the management zones of the bald eagle nest  
19 located north of the Brazos Bend State Park. Four of the  
20 representative alternatives include a segment that  
21 potentially encroaches upon the management zones for an  
22 existing bald eagle's nest. Since the management zones  
23 are a recommendation by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
24 in their Bald Eagle Management Guidelines, the study team  
25 has initiated coordination with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife

1 Service and is currently monitoring the status of the nest  
2 and its success. The occurrence of the nest is  
3 complicated by the fact that Brazos Bend State Park is  
4 located to the south. Study team biologists have been  
5 monitoring the nest and the bald eagle's feeding habits  
6 for the past eight months.

7                   These conflicts may be resolved by the  
8 proposed delisting of the bald eagle. The bald eagle is  
9 scheduled to be delisted as threatened species in July of  
10 this year. Although all regulatory protection will not  
11 cease upon delisting, the delisting may allow the study  
12 team to reconsider alternatives that were eliminated  
13 because of their proximity to the nest. Specifically, we  
14 will consider alternatives that include Segment G3 in the  
15 Final Environmental Impact Statement.

16                   Other environmental issues that were  
17 researched and considered in the DEIS includes social  
18 issues, vegetative communities, relocations, air quality,  
19 noise, floodplains, historic and archeological resources  
20 and hazardous materials.

21                   Again, you can find all of these impacts  
22 quantified in the handouts or the DEIS. The constraints  
23 that I have just discussed are some of the more  
24 significant environmental consequences of the alternatives  
25 that are being considered. All environmental consequences

1 are decide -- described in the DEIS.

2                   If you know of any other environmental  
3 issues that should be further addressed, please let us  
4 know through your verbal or written comments. The Final  
5 Environmental Impact Statement will document and respond  
6 to all of your comments along with those of the various  
7 agencies involved.

8                   That concludes my portion of the  
9 presentation. I'm now going to turn it back over to Stan  
10 Cooper with TxDOT. He will be discussing TxDOT's  
11 right-of-way acquisition and relocation policies.

12                   MR. COOPER: Thank you, Kristie.

13                   At this time I would like to present TxDOT's  
14 policies on right-of-way acquisition and relocation  
15 assistance. Both the United States and Texas  
16 Constitutions provide that no private land may be taken  
17 for public purposes without adequate compensation being  
18 paid therefor. The TxDOT Right-of-way Acquisition and  
19 Relocation Assistance Program will be conducted in  
20 accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real  
21 Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970, as amended.

22                   Relocation resources are available to all  
23 residential, business relocatees without discrimination.  
24 Thus, all landowners from whom property is needed for  
25 highway purposes are entitled to be paid for that

1 property. In that regard, TxDOT contracts with  
2 independent fee appraisers who inspect the individual  
3 parcels of land needed for highway purposes and they  
4 prepare reports for the property to arrive at the amount  
5 of just compensation to be paid.

6           Just compensation is based upon the fair  
7 market value of the land. Simply stated, this is the  
8 amount a willing seller would expect from a willing buyer,  
9 neither being under any compulsion to buy or sell. And  
10 both having reasonable knowledge of relevant facts.

11           After the appraisal is completed, each  
12 property owner will be personally contacted by a  
13 representative from TxDOT's right-of-way section and given  
14 a copy of the appraisal of their property. That  
15 individual will go over, in detail, the steps involved in  
16 acquiring property for highway purposes. These steps  
17 include an opportunity to make a one-time counter-offer to  
18 TxDOT. Under the laws of eminent domain, if the property  
19 owners feel that they are not being justly compensated,  
20 they have the right to pursue a hearing by three special  
21 commissioners. And if still not satisfied, the amount  
22 will be determined by a six-person jury.

23           Occasionally, TxDOT receives or solicits  
24 donations of private land for highway purposes. However,  
25 whether or not such land is ultimately donated is based

1 upon the free and voluntary act of the individual property  
2 owner and only after the property owner has been informed  
3 of the right to receive just compensation for their  
4 property.

5           Detailed information regarding right-of-way  
6 acquisition procedures can be obtained from the TxDOT  
7 right-of-way acquisition representative. Booklets  
8 entitled The State Right-of-way Purchase are also  
9 available for your information which provides general  
10 information on acquisition procedures. We have several  
11 copies of these booklets available this evening there at  
12 the table back in the back corner.

13           The development of highways or other public  
14 transportation services needed to serve and improve our  
15 way of life require that -- the use of land. This, in  
16 turn, means that some persons may be required to move to  
17 another location. TxDOT is aware of the cost and  
18 inconvenience associated with having to move from a home,  
19 business, or a farm. In order to assist those who are  
20 required to move, TxDOT provides payment and services to  
21 aid in movement to a new location through its Relocation  
22 Assistance Program.

23           It is TxDOT policy on residential relocation  
24 that no person will be displaced due to right-of-way  
25 acquisition until safe and sanitary replacement housing is

1 available in the area. The available housing must also be  
2 open to persons regardless of race, color, religion or  
3 nationality and be within the financial means of the  
4 person displaced. Relocation assistance is available to  
5 all individuals, families, businesses, farms and nonprofit  
6 organizations displaced as a result of the state highway  
7 or other transportation project.

8                   This assistance applies to tenants as well  
9 as owners occupying the real property needed for the  
10 project. Replacement properties must be comparable with  
11 regard to the type of construction, design, age and  
12 condition and must be located in a comparable neighborhood  
13 with equally accessible public services and places of  
14 employment. The TxDOT relocation office will also provide  
15 assistance to displaced businesses and nonprofit  
16 organizations to aid in their satisfactory relocation with  
17 minimal delay so as not to cause a substantial loss in  
18 earnings.

19                   The project will not proceed to construction  
20 unless all displaced families and businesses are advised  
21 of comparable replacement sites within the financial means  
22 of the individuals affected. Please be aware that we also  
23 have relocation assistance brochures for your information,  
24 which are offered for general information purposes only.  
25 It is not a document of law, rule, or regulation.

1                   So far we have about 35 people signed up to  
2 speak. If anyone is holding a speaker registration card,  
3 we need to have you turn it in during the break; and  
4 anyone who needs to register can sign up out at the --  
5 we've got a list out at the registration table.

6                   This concludes our oral presentation at this  
7 time. We will take a 15-minute break. After the break we  
8 will reconvene to receive oral comments from the public.  
9 If you would like to speak and you haven't filled out a  
10 card, please get on the list. Please take some time to  
11 look at the displays on the side and the back. If you  
12 have any questions, please feel free to ask us.

13                   We will be reconvening for oral comments at  
14 approximately 8:14. Thank you.

15                   (Recess)

16                   MR. COOPER: We have received about 36 --  
17 35, 36 requests to present oral comments. If you would  
18 like to make oral comments but you haven't filled out a  
19 card, would you please raise your hand now so we can add  
20 you to our list?

21                   I would like to go over the format for  
22 making oral comments one more time. We will call on those  
23 of you who have completed the registration cards in the  
24 order in which they were received. Please make your  
25 comments at the microphone here at the podium located in

1 the center aisle. We ask that you limit your comments to  
2 three minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak. We  
3 have a timer on the podium that will limit you.

4           Please do not repeat things that other  
5 commenters have already said. That will help us move  
6 along, since we do have a large number of commenters.  
7 Please, we request that you limit your comments both for  
8 or against to issues related to Segment C of the Grand  
9 Parkway.

10           We will not respond to your comments during  
11 this portion of the meeting. This portion is -- of the  
12 meeting is to receive your input and comments that should  
13 be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement. Each  
14 of your comments will be addressed or answered in the  
15 Final Environmental Impact Statement.

16           To begin with we would like to have any of  
17 the public officials who are present make comments, if  
18 they would like. Councilperson Lee Hedt, if you would  
19 like to make any comments. Councilperson Harriett Karnei.  
20 Okay. Councilperson Carol Grubles, no.

21           Daisy Mitchell, would you like to make any  
22 comments?

23           MS. MITCHELL: I have a letter that  
24 Representative Dora Oliva would like to have read.

25           MR. COOPER: Would you like to present that?

1 MS. MITCHELL: Yes.

2 Good evening. On behalf of State  
3 Representative Dora Olivo, I have a letter that she sent  
4 to be read and to be presented as referenced. June 13th,  
5 2000, Mr. Jim Darden, Director Project Development, Texas  
6 Department of Transportation, Post Office Box 1386,  
7 Houston, Texas.

8 Dear Mr. Darden, a very important decision  
9 will be made as to the route of the Grand Parkway in Fort  
10 Bend County. For the record, I am urging the Texas  
11 Department of Transportation to make every effort possible  
12 to avoid disturbing any of the natural habitants in the  
13 area being considered for the Grand Parkway. One of these  
14 natural habitants is the Brazos State Park. We're very  
15 fortunate to have a state park in our county. We must  
16 protect this treasure. There are also other natural  
17 habitants that have been mentioned that are in the area of  
18 the proposed routes for the Grand Parkway. Again, I urge  
19 you to protect these natural habitants in determining the  
20 route of the Grand Parkway.

21 Thank you for your consideration in this  
22 matter. Sincerely, Dora Olivo.

23 MR. COOPER: Thank you.

24 Jim Hemingway. Tom Stavinoha.

25 COUNTY COMMISSIONER TOM STAVINOKHA: I hope

1 that when y'all continue y'all's planning, y'all do go  
2 talk to landowners. That's one thing I'm finding out that  
3 there have been very little consulting with the landowners  
4 themselves. Y'all have been going in surveying their  
5 property, putting markers out, yet the landowners  
6 themselves -- they probably could have given you a lot of  
7 information you would have needed right away if you would  
8 have consulted with them a lot sooner than what y'all have  
9 so far. So, that's a big concern that better -- better  
10 input from the actual landowners before you do a whole lot  
11 more planning.

12                   Also, try to avoid splitting any property,  
13 splitting rice fields, pastures. That's going to be very,  
14 very important to the people when you cross their  
15 property. Keep in mind that once you get between Big  
16 Creek and the river you can expect 4-foot of floodwater  
17 and I think y'all know that. How that's going to obstruct  
18 the flooding to keep the water moving down river, that's  
19 going to be a major, major problem because there's several  
20 times that I've seen water from Big Creek itself all the  
21 way to the river where you could walk -- I mean, get off a  
22 boat and step onto the roof a barn or a shed in those  
23 areas there. So, keep that in mind. Just a natural  
24 floodplain you're going to be crossing is going to be a  
25 problem also.

1                   Please stay away as much as you can from  
2 Brazos Bend State Park. Stay off of Sawmill Road  
3 completely. There are a lot of residents in there that  
4 you're going to be affecting, that whole, what we call,  
5 Brown community. Stay away from that area.

6                   I'll have a proposed route that I'll be  
7 showing y'all maybe next couple of days where before you  
8 get to, what we call, the third cement bridge, way up  
9 north, you'll be avoiding those two lakes that's at the  
10 third cement bridge. I think Muir Lake's on the right and  
11 there's Oak Lake on the left. Turn before you get to  
12 those. The property owners I've talked to are agreeable.  
13 You're not going to be moving any houses. You're probably  
14 only going through four different landowners if you take  
15 that route. It's probably the shortest distance to get to  
16 the George Ranch and I think they're pretty much agreeable  
17 to aligning the Parkway to go -- to go through their  
18 property.

19                   Those are the major -- major concerns that I  
20 have. Thank you.

21                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. Freddie Newsome  
22 Mayor of Thompsons.

23                   MAYOR NEWSOME: No comments.

24                   MR. COOPER: Jim Gonzales, Commissioner for  
25 the City of Richmond. Okay.

1                   The -- I will read off the name -- names of  
2 the first two speakers. The first is Dr. Philip  
3 Inderwiesen and then after that is Aziennina Brenneman.

4                   You have three minutes.

5                   DR. PHILIP INDERWIESEN: Okay. What I'm  
6 going to speak about here is essentially a short synopsis,  
7 the tip of the iceberg of about a 30-page report I will be  
8 submitting. Basically I've reviewed the DEIS and I hired  
9 a geoscientist, who's dealt with environmental matters and  
10 is also a fraud examiner, to look at the DEIS. So far I  
11 can only endorse the no-build option, even though  
12 Commissioner-Elect Stavinoha has some good ideas that I  
13 would normally support.

14                   Basically the no-build option is needed to  
15 protect the public and the tax dollars. We found the DEIS  
16 is full of errors, omissions and basically deceitful  
17 statements meant to sway the federal government to provide  
18 money.

19                   The geoscientist I hired says the public is  
20 being deprived of intangible right to honest services of  
21 federal, state and local public officials as a result of  
22 egregious technical omissions in the DEIS. The proposed  
23 project will cause significant losses of prime farm land,  
24 wetlands and air and water quality for the proposed  
25 project area. Also, the DEIS fails to follow the NEPA

1 requirement that systems approaches be used to interrelate  
2 all the components of the natural environment, including  
3 air, land, water and life. Furthermore, the DEIS does not  
4 provide responsible public officials and the lay public  
5 with assurances that the proper local officials, federal  
6 officials, state officials are consulted that have  
7 jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to  
8 the environmental impacts.

9                   Concerning Brazos Bend State Park, we  
10 attended a May 5th, Grand Parkway workshop, Texas Parks &  
11 Wildlife had reiterated their insistence that the proposed  
12 project stay north of the Big Creek diversion channel,  
13 otherwise, water quality within the park would be  
14 compromised as well as migrating wildlife to and from the  
15 park. What that means is that it has to be included in  
16 the DEIS as a -- as required by the Federal Highway  
17 Administration.

18                   Another egregious problem is environmental  
19 inequity. John Bettencourt with the Harris County Tax  
20 Adviser's Service has just done a demographic study  
21 showing white flight from Harris County into the  
22 surrounding counties. This parkway, including Segment C,  
23 is around that location. Therefore, the federal dollars  
24 would be going to promote basically master-planned  
25 communities targeted towards the upper-income earners.

1 This is illegal by federal standards. Therefore, they  
2 should not get federal money.

3                   Finally, as part of the Coalition Against  
4 Long Point Landfill, they site the Grand Parkway as an  
5 economic justification for the feds to provide money;  
6 however, they do not cite the fact that Fort Bend County  
7 residents are in legal opposition at this time against  
8 that landfill site and that that permit will probably be  
9 turned down. This is deceit.

10                   Thank you.

11                   MR. COOPER: Time has expired. Azienina  
12 Brenneman and then Jennifer Scolton.

13                   MS. AZIENNINA BRENNEMAN: My name is  
14 Azienina Susan Brenneman. My friends call me Susan. You  
15 know the Brennemans? I saw someone Brennan. Pilgrims.  
16 They were Quakers. They landed on the New England coast  
17 in the early 1700s. One of my great-great-great  
18 grandfathers was born in the New England area in the year  
19 1775. I'm also a native-born Texan. I know how y'all  
20 feel about your Yankees. So, I've been around here a  
21 while. I am the mother of four children, three daughters  
22 and a son. I am a volunteer for the Fort Bend Astronomy  
23 Club. I am a volunteer at the George Observatory for the  
24 Houston Museum of Natural Science. I am a volunteer for  
25 the Brazos Bend State Park and I am an officer at the

1 Brazos Bend State Park Volunteer Association. I am  
2 secretary.

3 I know we have some of our volunteers here  
4 tonight. If you're a volunteer, would you please stand  
5 up? Park volunteers.

6 Many of our volunteers live closer to the  
7 Manvel area and they are also simultaneously attending the  
8 meeting there. There are over 110 volunteers at the  
9 Brazos Bend State Park. It's part of what makes this park  
10 very special. I can't talk about Brazos Bend State Park  
11 in three minutes. There's just no way. It is an  
12 incredible park.

13 In 1994, it was one of the top ten parks in  
14 the United States. Texas Parks & Wildlife it has a  
15 philosophy, which I personally believe in and endorse and  
16 I'll go ahead and share that with you. We seek to balance  
17 outdoor recreation with conservation as we achieve greater  
18 self-sufficiency. On one hand we must manage and protect  
19 our natural and cultural resources. At the same time, we  
20 must generate increased revenue by adding value through  
21 more and better public services. Brazos Bend is one of  
22 the five parks of the Texas Parks & Wildlife that is  
23 self-sustaining. It does not receive money from the Texas  
24 Parks & Wildlife.

25 We have -- and the park opened in April of

1 '84. In the last 15 years, we've had over 7 1/2 million  
2 visitors. We get over half a million people a year there.  
3 We -- a firm that is culturally diverse and well-trained  
4 staff achieve this balance and we must never forget not in  
5 the haste of business nor in the pride of science that the  
6 outdoors should be a source of joy. Providing outdoor  
7 experiences where young minds form values will be our  
8 greatest contribution to the future.

9                   The Brazos Bend State Park is a wildlife  
10 refuge. Anything that can get in the park is protected.  
11 Hunting is not prohibited (sic). I saw maps where there's  
12 other conservations but there's a difference about the  
13 Brazos Bend State Park. The public can get to it.  
14 There's another difference about the Brazos Bend State  
15 Park. We teach people. We give lecture. We have over 40  
16 different programs. We have Boy Scouts. We have Girl  
17 Scouts. We have YMCA and others that come out to attend  
18 our program. We teach about the wildlife.

19                   I'm going to try and finish my time focusing  
20 on some of the birds. This year we had a bird count on  
21 December 26. There were 147 different birds --

22                   MR. COOPER: Time.

23                   MS. BRENNEMAN: The bald -- seven bald  
24 eagles were spotted. Seven bald eagles were spotted at  
25 the Brazos Bend State Park.

1 MR. COOPER: Jennifer Scolton and Jim  
2 Hemingway.

3 MS. JENNIFER SCOLTON: I can't do a whole  
4 lot of big talking like some of the people that just stood  
5 up here. I am a resident that lives 2 or 3 miles from  
6 Brazos Bend State Park and I'm greatly opposed to what  
7 y'all are doing. You're going to run through all the  
8 wildlife out there and I know y'all sit here and tell  
9 everybody in this room that it's for an evacuation route.  
10 Fine. But with that comes development and running off our  
11 wildlife and everything.

12 We move out there to -- to see it, to live  
13 with it, not to kill it and run it away; and that's what's  
14 gonna happen. So, I just stood up here to oppose it.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. COOPER: Jim Hemingway and then Annette  
17 Beres.

18 Is Jim -- Jim Hemingway here? Apparently  
19 he's left.

20 Annette Beres.

21 MS. ANNETTE BERES: I don't have any  
22 comment, not at this time. I'll write it.

23 MR. COOPER: You want to put in some later?

24 Okay. Joan McLeod.

25 MS. JOAN McLEOD: I'm listening but I don't

1 think I've got a -- I do want to say something about  
2 hurricane evacuation because I'm from Galveston and -- can  
3 you hear me? I'm from Galveston, Texas but I'm actually  
4 from Richmond, Texas because that's where I was born and  
5 raised. And I lived in the country with this beautiful  
6 wildlife and grew up around it, rode a school bus on Farm  
7 Road 762 that you-all use to go to Brazos Bend State Park.  
8 And I, too, am very happy; and I -- my father was very  
9 opposed to Highway 59 dividing his pastures in half. But  
10 if it hadn't divided his pasture, you all probably  
11 wouldn't be living in Fort Bend County. So, I've gone  
12 with both sides of the issue. And my mother said,  
13 "Progress is coming on, Manford --" Manford Williams --  
14 "wake up and smell the roses."

15                   Well, we've been smelling the roses for the  
16 last 10 or 15 years and we've seen property values go up  
17 and we have paid dearly with our taxes for all the  
18 improvements of the road -- roads and the land and we've  
19 worked with the highway department and we donated the  
20 Grand Parkway. So, I do -- do truly feel that either way  
21 they've given it back. They can't make up their mind.  
22 They do want to serve the public.

23                   As far as evacuation route coming from  
24 Galveston, there's a definite need to come out of  
25 Galveston during a storm. We have to drive up Highway 6,

1 if it's not flooded, or we go up 45, which you know is  
2 just bumper to bumper. So, the Grand Parkway would  
3 certainly ease that problem and it's a necessity. Now,  
4 where it goes -- can't go through Santa Fe because they  
5 don't want us; but, I mean, my instructions are if y'all  
6 don't want us to leave Galveston, get off Highway 45  
7 coming down there. We don't need you either. You know,  
8 we have a beautiful island; and we don't need our tourists  
9 on the weekends in the summer.

10 Thanks.

11 MR. COOPER: Leonard Pattillo --

12 MR. LEONARD PATTILLO: I pass.

13 MR. COOPER: -- representing the Fort Bend  
14 Astronomy Club and then Stephanie Bone.

15 MR. PATTILLO: I pass

16 MR. COOPER: Okay. Leonard Pattillo is  
17 passing. Stephanie Bone.

18 MS. STEPHANIE BONE: Hi. My name is  
19 Stephanie Bone. I live in the heart of downtown Houston.  
20 I come out to the park to feel like I'm out in the country  
21 to breathe a little easier, to enjoy the wildlife, to  
22 listen to the birds, to listen to the frogs. What's gonna  
23 happen in 20 years and someone in my position who's living  
24 in downtown Houston is they're going to come out here and  
25 it's going to be built out fully. And what that brings

1 with it is pollution to the water, pollution to the air,  
2 pollution to life in this area.

3                   And I think what -- as far as the DEIS is  
4 concerned, I -- I really feel that it's lacking in its  
5 thoroughness of the evaluation of all the secondary  
6 development, looking at the real long term of what's going  
7 to happen if this road is built. As far as the hurricane  
8 evacuation route, I -- I feel like it hasn't been  
9 addressed as far as what's going to happen when -- when  
10 this area is flooded and the roads to the Grand Parkway  
11 are flooded. And what are -- what are all the options of  
12 the hurricane evacuation route and why is this one the  
13 best one?

14                   I guess I feel like today we're at a  
15 crossroads here in this area for this land, everyone here;  
16 and there's -- it's a very important time for us to think  
17 very deeply about what we want this piece of land to look  
18 like in the future for our children and our grandchildren  
19 because once it's lost, it's lost.

20                   And as I was told earlier, the road is going  
21 where the market tells us it needs to go. Well, I think  
22 it's time for us to stand up and try to decide where we  
23 want our road to go, if we want it to go anywhere near  
24 here. And it's -- it's time for us to let our voices be  
25 heard and not play to the market's trend because once we

1 do, then we've given in. And we've all seen the sprawling  
2 development from Houston and the Grand Parkway itself is  
3 listed as one of the top-ten wasteful transportation  
4 projects in the nation right now. And I don't think it's  
5 an intelligent place for any of our tax dollars to be  
6 going because it does nothing but facilitate sprawling  
7 growth, which is one of the most inefficient uses of all  
8 our resources that there is.

9 Thank you very much.

10 MR. COOPER: Lesly Van Dame from the Sierra  
11 Club and then Nancy Loggins.

12 MS. LESLY VAN DAME: Hi. Name is Lesly Van  
13 Dame. I represent the Houston group of the Sierra Club.  
14 We wish to state our general opposition to the Grand  
15 Parkway overall as we have many times before. The  
16 Grand -- as just stated, the Grand Parkway has been named  
17 one of the nation's top ten most unnecessary highway  
18 projects by Taxpayers for Common Sense. We, the  
19 taxpayers, will be funding a project that is not a  
20 long-range solution for regional mobility yet is likely to  
21 exacerbate our serious air quality problems and seriously  
22 impact the surrounding lands.

23 With regard to the draft EIS for Segment C  
24 of the proposed Grand Parkway, we know many issues and  
25 concerns that are either insufficiently addressed or not

1 addressed at all. We will submit a detailed written  
2 comment of -- a set of written comments but I will point  
3 out a few right here.

4           As was stated both by Mr. Gornet and -- and  
5 others, the purpose and need for the Grand Parkway is  
6 supposed to be that it will serve as a hurricane  
7 evacuation route. However, the DEIS never discusses what  
8 would occur in a hurricane and how that area would be  
9 protected from flooding in such a case, other alternative  
10 hurricane evacu- -- evacuation routes and how those can be  
11 improved. We think the DEIS ought to consider all  
12 alternatives in making a final decision. Another area of  
13 impact amongst many is air quality, the actual air  
14 pollution generated by the Grand Parkway and the  
15 congestion it will cause is not addressed in the DEIS, the  
16 additional air pollution that will occur secondarily as  
17 the Grand Parkway induces more development, residences,  
18 commercial and industrial complexes.

19           We also in our comments will ask for quite a  
20 bit more, quantification of the impacts. For instance,  
21 what impact will the Grand Parkway have on all secondary  
22 roads? What truck traffic will be generated from the  
23 Grand Parkway if it becomes a part of the I-69 route? And  
24 then what will be the impact of the additional truck  
25 traffic on air quality, noise pollution, quality of life,

1 et cetera? What about the impact of the Grand Parkway on  
2 subsidence? As someone else has already noted, prime  
3 agricultural land.

4                   We have quite a bit -- I won't go through  
5 the whole list here because we'll submit comments. We can  
6 only say that we really do opt for the no-build  
7 opposition.

8                   Thank you.

9                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. Nancy Loggins has  
10 declined to speak. We have Wes Whiddon and then Bonnie  
11 Trilicek.

12                   MR. WES WHIDDON: My name is Wes Whiddon.  
13 I'm with -- I'm a member, rather, of the Fort Bend  
14 Astronomy Club. "If you build it, they will come." This  
15 saying from a popular movie of a few years ago epitomizes  
16 what will happen if the Grand Parkway is allowed to  
17 encroach into the area immediately north of the Brazos  
18 Bend State Park. Access is the key to development and  
19 development in this area is detrimental to the health and  
20 well-being of a unique, ecological system that has been  
21 protected for many years. This is a natural resource that  
22 affords people, not just from the Houston area but from  
23 around the world, the opportunity to see rare wildlife, be  
24 a part of nature and through the George Observatory view  
25 the wonders of the night sky.

1                   There are many reasons why the Grand Parkway  
2 should not be built in the area of Brazos Bend State Park,  
3 especially using GPA's Option B. Here are just a few:  
4 Increased development bringing homes and additional  
5 traffic into the area; increased light pollution from  
6 homes, automobile traffic and street lighting that will  
7 destroy public and scientific use of Houston Museum of  
8 Natural Science's George Observatory; noise pollution from  
9 automobile traffic; detrimental effects on the Brazos Bend  
10 State Park's water quality and watershed; effects on  
11 animal migration. It goes also against the wishes of park  
12 officials and the Houston Museum of Natural Science's  
13 George Observatory. In fact, I can find no person in the  
14 public who is in favor of the Grand Parkway.

15                   Gentlemen and ladies, I understand that  
16 building roads and highways is difficult at best. I also  
17 understand that there's a public need for access to easily  
18 travel on safe roadways, but there are precious things on  
19 this planet that must be preserved. Brazos Bend State  
20 Park and the George Observatory are among them. If you  
21 build it, they will come; and when they do, slowly but  
22 surely they will destroy another one of these precious  
23 places.

24                   Thank you.

25                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

1 Bonnie Trilicek and then Dr. Louis Binder.

2 MS. BONNIE TRILICEK: My name is Bonnie  
3 Trilicek. I'm a lifetime resident of Fort Bend County. I  
4 have two names -- roads named after my maiden name Cumings  
5 Road, one on north of -- north of Rosenberg and one in the  
6 area that we're discussing. I do live there at this time  
7 off of the end of Cumings Road. What I see is not only  
8 the effect of the ecological and the animals. As I drive  
9 down my driveway, a bobcat crosses my road. How long will  
10 that be? The deer come up my backyard. How long will  
11 that be?

12 But mostly how will this affect the air  
13 quality with the traveling -- extra traveling of cars in  
14 my area? Also the traffic that also imposes, let me say,  
15 chances of having wrecks, which our road has already been  
16 changed because we had two deaths on the curve. Is this  
17 going to decrease our deaths on the curve or is it just  
18 going to increase our deaths on the highway in our area?

19 I oppose the Grand Parkway, but I know that  
20 it's inevitable at some point. Thank you.

21 MR. COOPER: Thank you.

22 Dr. Louis Binder, president of the Fort Bend  
23 Astronomy Club and then Sandy Jespersen.

24 DR. LOUIS BINDER: Hi. My name's Louis --  
25 Dr. Louis Binder. I represent the Fort Bend Astronomy

1 Club. We provide almost all of the volunteers for the  
2 Houston Museum of Natural Science's George Observatory  
3 located inside Brazos Bend State Park.

4           My 9-year-old daughter and I spend lots of  
5 time educating and showing the night sky to millions of --  
6 well, not millions a week -- about 40,000 people a year is  
7 the exact number that come out. We show them the night  
8 sky, the Milky Way, the planets, galaxies and comets. The  
9 Fort Bend Astronomy Club has helped to share this because  
10 this is the final frontier. Space is our final frontier.

11           And building the Grand Parkway will just destroy  
12 more and more of the night sky and occlude most of the  
13 things that we take for granted that we can see now.

14           How many of you guys can remember the great  
15 comets Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp as -- which were easily  
16 reached naked-eye visibility in our night sky? But how  
17 many of y'all remember seeing it as extending two-thirds  
18 of the way across the sky with two tails instead of just  
19 one? Not many but -- but a few people, you know, saw this  
20 out in West Texas. Thousands of people migrated out to  
21 the George Observatory in Brazos Bend State Park to see  
22 the same thing; but out in the skies around 59, you saw a  
23 hazy little spot in the sky. So, nobody really paid much  
24 attention.

25           These incredible views may not be seen in

1 our lifetime again, as it will be thousands of years  
2 because these comets return to our night skies that close.  
3 Driving out to the country at night, one often hears  
4 comments about how dark it is and, oh, look at all those  
5 stars. We want to preserve the stars, the Milky Way and  
6 all the activities that come with star gazing for our  
7 children as well as for our future. The increase in sky  
8 brightness comes from development around the Grand  
9 Parkway. Poor lighting that extends into the night sky is  
10 wasted energy, wasted dollars, yours and mine, and  
11 decreases the rural and suburban environment that we all  
12 strive to preserve.

13                   The building of the Grand Parkway should be  
14 opposed and if built, the proposed opposition A, which  
15 places the Grand Parkway and associated development as far  
16 north of the museum's George Observatory to preserve its  
17 educational resource and recreational aspects to the  
18 growing numbers of visitors in the number of years.

19                   Our children grow up in Texas learning a  
20 song that our Grand Parkway associates and elected  
21 officials all know too well in the great state of Texas  
22 that will help to preserve. Help keep the stars big and  
23 bright deep in the heart of Texas.

24                   Thank you.

25                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. Sandy Jespersen and

1 then William Dillen.

2                   MS. SANDY JESPERSEN: I think the DE -- DEIS  
3 does not support all the reasons given for the  
4 construction of this road. One comment from the DEIS,  
5 quote, capitalize on existing habitat conversion and  
6 fragmentation by utilizing an existing break between  
7 Pilant Lake and Big Creek. That is Sawmill Road, unquote.

8                   This statement seems to be saying that a  
9 multi-lane highway with a bridge across the Brazos River  
10 will have no more impact than the existing Sawmill Road,  
11 which is a dead-end road that serves a few homeowners. A  
12 road that allows free water drainage and is completely  
13 underwater at times. Is this a logical conclusion?

14                   Another statement from DEIS, quote, no  
15 publicly-owned recreation area or parks will be directly  
16 affected by or are directly adjacent to any alternatives,  
17 unquote.

18                   There will be no common boundaries; but if  
19 the boundary of Brazos Bend State Park is only a thousand  
20 feet from the Grand Parkway, I do think it will be  
21 directly affected and the effects won't be beneficial.

22                   Another comment from the DEIS, quote, no  
23 critical habitat for endangered species has been  
24 designated within the study area, unquote.

25                   We all hear about the threatened and

1 endangered species but there are other concerns. In a  
2 booklet from the Texas Parks & Wildlife entitled Rare &  
3 Declining Birds of Texas - Conservation Needed by Clifton  
4 E. Shackelford and Mark W. Walford is a statement, and I  
5 quote, however diverse the state may be, birds are  
6 experiencing serious declines due to many factors, mainly  
7 human causes like habitat loss and increased urbanization.  
8 Only one threatened species was noted in the DEIS, the  
9 bald eagle. No mention or concern was noted for the many  
10 rare and declining species listed in the booklet.

11 I truly hope this hearing is not just a  
12 formality. I do hope the Texas Department of  
13 Transportation is listening to the representatives of  
14 Texas Parks & Wildlife and also members of the community.  
15 I prefer that the Grand Parkway not be built; but  
16 certainly if it's built, don't build it near Brazos Bend  
17 State Park. Don't contribute to the decline of birds and  
18 other species to favor a few who will benefit from a road.  
19 This is your opportunity to protect critical habitat for  
20 wildlife and protect the quality of life for the  
21 community.

22 MR. COOPER: Thank you. William Dillen and  
23 then Richard Jespersen.

24 MR. WILLIAM DILLEN: Again, my name is  
25 William Dillen. I'm a member of the Fort Bend Astronomy

1 Club and past president. For the past ten years I  
2 volunteered as a telescope operator at the George  
3 Observatory.

4           We've heard a lot of good arguments today.  
5 I'd like to focus on a very narrow one and that is the  
6 scientific loss that will occur if the Grand Parkway  
7 Segment C is built, especially the Opposition B which  
8 brings the parkway practically on the doorstep of the  
9 Brazos Bend State Park. I'm going to give you an example  
10 of -- of the scientific loss, a study that we recently did  
11 that couldn't be done if that parkway and the development  
12 and the light pollution that's associated with it were  
13 there.

14           In early March, professional astronomers  
15 discovered a earth crossing asteroid. From tracking the  
16 asteroid, they knew that in early May the asteroid would  
17 pass within 4 million miles of the earth. It doesn't pose  
18 any immediate danger but there are about a thousand  
19 objects out there that do. Now, as it passed -- when it  
20 made its close pass, it represented an opportunity for the  
21 giant radio telescope at Arecibo in Puerto Rico to bounce  
22 radar waves off this asteroid so that something about its  
23 size and composition could be -- could be known.

24           It will be important for -- these studies  
25 are important because one day our species may be forced to

1 intercept such an object and deflect it from smashing to  
2 the earth. Normally astronomy is a very esoteric thing;  
3 but if an astroid were to hit the earth, it would be a bad  
4 day for everyone. So, what we -- Arecibo had a problem,  
5 though, and that was for this particular asteroid is that  
6 the error in its position would be such that they would  
7 not be able to know where to send out their powerful radar  
8 signals. They needed to know the position of the asteroid  
9 to within a 60th of a degree in the sky and they put a  
10 call on the Internet for amateurs and professionals to  
11 help them out in tracking the asteroid.

12                   We answered that call. It took us  
13 everything -- it took all the capability that we had. We  
14 stacked images. We worked very hard and we were able to  
15 pull out the faint signal of the asteroid. We sent the  
16 precise positions of this asteroid to the radar team at  
17 Arecibo. We got a nice thank-you from them from -- on  
18 behalf of the entire radar team.

19                   They were able to acquire the asteroid. We  
20 know that this asteroid's about twice the size of our  
21 auditorium; and I'm sure there'll be scientific papers on  
22 what they've learned about it. If the sky from our  
23 president are -- the president of our club did not have  
24 time to go into it. But he's done a study that shows the  
25 parkway would probably double the sky brightness. If that

1 were to occur, we would not be able to do the study we  
2 did. We -- this isn't the only time we've been able to do  
3 this. We -- we've helped professional astronomers many  
4 times.

5           Let me conclude by saying there's an old  
6 saying from fighter pilots, it's the one you don't see  
7 that gets you. And this parkway and it's -- especially  
8 it's Option B is going to fog our canopy. Thank you.

9           MR. COOPER: Thank you. Richard Jespersen  
10 and then Keith Rivich.

11           DR. RICHARD JESPERSEN: I'm Dr. Richard  
12 Jespersen and I've reviewed the DEIS from the standpoint  
13 of the -- of a research scientist. And I'm submitting my  
14 complete report in writing but I'd like to make just a few  
15 comments summarizing my conclusions. I might begin by  
16 saying that at the beginning before I studied the DEIS, I  
17 really thought the no-build option was an extreme  
18 viewpoint; and after studying the DEIS, I've totally  
19 changed my mind on that.

20           Just a few examples, from the computer  
21 modeling of the traffic flow assessment that was done, the  
22 only information that's provided as results of that are  
23 percent improvements in traffic flow due to the building  
24 of Segment C. It does not state anything about the  
25 capacity of the roadways or give any indication of the

1 real benefit of -- of reduce -- the computer -- I mean, of  
2 the traffic reductions that are claimed. The natural  
3 conclusion of that study is simply that the building of  
4 Segment C would be allowed under TxDOT's requirement that  
5 there be a minimum of 5,000 vehicles per day. The need to  
6 build Segment C to improve traffic flow has not at all  
7 been demonstrated by the DEIS.

8                   For hurricane evacuation assessment, another  
9 computer modeled predicts the time to evacuate Galveston  
10 and Brazoria Counties using only Interstate 45, Highway  
11 288 and Highway 6. There's no mention of -- of State  
12 Highway 36, Beltway 8 or any of the other roads that would  
13 actually carry significant traffic. This is a case of an  
14 inappropriate assumptions for the model, and the need to  
15 build Segment C for hurricane evacuation has definitely  
16 not been demonstrated.

17                   It is stated that the northern route for  
18 Segment C would cross the most important block of Columbia  
19 Bottomland suggesting this gives preference to the  
20 southerly alternatives. But there's no mention of the  
21 fact that choosing the southerly route for Segment C would  
22 be followed by construction of the Fort Bend Parkway  
23 through the very Columbia Bottomlands avoiding -- avoided  
24 by moving Segment C to the south. What must be considered  
25 is the combined impact of Segment C and the Fort Bend

1 Parkway.

2                   Further, the environmental impact of the  
3 roadway itself may be very minor compared to the impact of  
4 the commercial and residential development which will  
5 follow and which are a primary reason stated for  
6 developing the roadway. The DEIS has only brief  
7 discussion of these secondary impacts with no data  
8 presented. This is not sufficient.

9                   My own view is that it is not wise to  
10 further stimulate growth in an area when --

11                   MR. COOPER: Time.

12                   DR. JESPERSEN: Thank you very much.

13                   MR. COOPER: Keith Rivich and then  
14 Dr. Marrack.

15                   MR. KEITH RIVICH: Okay. I don't think  
16 there's a whole much -- bunch more I can say, especially  
17 about Brazos Bend State Park and the George Observatory  
18 and so forth. But how many of you guys have ever gone out  
19 to the country and come home. You smelled the fresh air,  
20 you've seen the bright stars, get back to the city and it  
21 stinks? Well, folks, guys, we are the country. Brazos  
22 Bend State Park and the George Observatory, we are the  
23 country for millions of kids that come out there. Please  
24 don't take it away from us.

25                   Thank you.

1                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. Dr. Marrack and  
2 then John Albrecht.

3                   DR. MARRACK: Chairman, I'm Dr. Marrack,  
4 Fort Bend Medical Clinic. You may not realize that this  
5 area is not in compliance with the national air quality  
6 standards. What's more, if it's sufficient traffic to  
7 justify this project, then there will be more pollution.  
8 At the present time none of the Grand Parkway is concluded  
9 in the state limitation plan. It does not meet and cannot  
10 meet the conformity requirements of regulations. And, in  
11 fact, you will see today because the Houston  
12 Intercontinental Airport can't meet the conformity  
13 requirements, construction's stopping for its expansion.

14                   You really think you're gonna have  
15 precedence over the Houston Intercontinental Airport or  
16 the Bayport projects for the air quality? Something has  
17 to give. You're going.

18                   I suggest to you that this is nothing more  
19 than a highway Ponzi project for some speculative  
20 developers. It has no other future and no other  
21 project -- no other value. Once more, the DEIS does not  
22 meet the NEPA nor the CEQ requirements and the  
23 regulations. It doesn't consider the induced four  
24 secondary impacts of the complete development of this area  
25 that is required. Scrap the United States Supreme --

1 Supreme Court of the United States 1972.

2                   Again, you don't consider the other  
3 endangered species. You mentioned the bald eagle. The  
4 bald eagle nesting down here is a southern bald eagle.  
5 It's not one that comes from the north, which also uses  
6 Brazos Bend State Park. I will point out to you that  
7 whooping cranes have occasionally been using this area.  
8 Hanson (phonetic) Sparrow, another endangered species,  
9 uses this area. They're not on this EIS or DEIS. It's a  
10 totally inadequate product.

11                   Go home. Do a decent job and you will see  
12 why you should do no construction.

13                   MR. COOPER: John Albrecht and then Nan  
14 Hildreth.

15                   MR. JOHN ALBRECHT: I'm John Albrecht. I'm  
16 a resident of Brazos Bend Oak subdivision, which is  
17 north-northwest of the Brazos Bend State Park. Lots of  
18 folks here tonight expressing their love for the state  
19 park and the wildlife. Likewise, I have that love.  
20 That's why I live out there. We try to keep -- be good  
21 neighbors for the astronomers and keep down the low light  
22 but lots of impact from building this in the area to the  
23 wildlife, the homeowners, which haven't been talked about.

24                   And we live in a park. Most of our home  
25 sites are 2 to 3 acres park light with lots of wildlife,

1 ducks, turkeys, deer, squirrels, racoons, you name it. We  
2 love it out there and we support the no-build option.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. COOPER: Thank you. Nan Hildreth and  
5 then Richard Morrison.

6 MS. NAN HILDRETH: Hi. I'm Nan Hildreth. I  
7 live downtown, again, in the Heights area. It's booming.  
8 We're building new homes there, half-million-dollar homes.  
9 I agree with the man who said build it and they will come.  
10 Well, we want the -- our transportation, our state and  
11 federal transportation dollars invested in the downtown  
12 area. We don't mind people coming there. If y'all don't  
13 want them here, give us the money, we'll build it down  
14 there.

15 Now, we -- I'm sorry to oppose the plans  
16 of -- of the Grand Parkway Association and its promoters  
17 over the last 12 years, but times change and ideas change.  
18 And around the nation people are recognizing -- thinking  
19 in a different way about transportation and the resulting  
20 land use. Houston -- in Houston times are changing.  
21 We're having dirty air. We're getting a reputation for  
22 poor quality of life and most important to me is that  
23 business as usual means that we're degrading our children  
24 and our grandchildren's ability to care for themselves.  
25 We're degrading the natural capital that we depend on.

1 That's our top soil, our clean air, our farm land, our  
2 water.

3                   And the ideas around the nation are changing  
4 to respond to that. The Bank of America, the National  
5 Association of Home Builders, the Sierra Club and numerous  
6 other groups are endorsing a new idea called smart growth,  
7 which is let's develop in a way that is friendly to the  
8 environment and to the -- respects the people, that gives  
9 people more choices in transportation so that people in --  
10 I want -- and it would say people in Houston have a choice  
11 besides owning an automobile that we're -- there are  
12 different methods of getting around. That would be smart  
13 growth.

14                   Smart growth recognizes that if you build  
15 far out in -- far from existing home, work, and schools,  
16 then -- well, that's not smart growth. That's dumb  
17 growth. And the Grand Parkway being far out from  
18 everything would encourage residential areas far from  
19 existing resident -- from existing schools, work places  
20 and recreational facilities. So, the Grand Parkway  
21 Association would be, in my opinion, dumb growth.

22                   There are 24 state governors that have made  
23 smart growth a priority in their -- in their positions and  
24 last week the Greater Houston Partnership endorsed  
25 sensible growth, which is very similar to the initial

1 movement of smart growth, which is also supported by  
2 Sierra Club.

3 MR. COOPER: Time.

4 Thank you.

5 Richard Morrison and then Jerry Lemire.

6 MR. MORRISON: My name is Richard Morrison.  
7 I'm speaking on behalf of myself. I'm a resident here of  
8 Greatwood. I'm also speaking on behalf of  
9 Blackburn-Carter.

10 I am opposed to the Grand Parkway. I  
11 support the no-build option. The DEIS is deficient in  
12 several manners. I'd first like to say that I concur with  
13 everyone's opinion here tonight. I'd also like to add  
14 that there needs to be more analyzing of the Brazos River  
15 and the tributaries and their hydrology and hydraulics.  
16 The Grand Parkway is going to cross the Brazos River  
17 floodplain for about 8 miles. It's a very large  
18 floodplain, as well as a floodway. Analyzation needs to  
19 be done on the flow volume and the timing of the water  
20 stored in the floodplain and how the Brazos River and  
21 these tributaries are going to be affected by the Grand  
22 Parkway, as well as surrounding residences and any other  
23 roads that may connect to the Brazos River.

24 Additionally, secondary impacts and  
25 cumulative impacts need to be more fully analyzed.

1 There's some kind of periphery touching on these in the  
2 DEIS but there's no quantifications of the impacts. For  
3 instance, we need to know the total amount of land that's  
4 gonna be developed in the corridor from past activities as  
5 well as future activities, if this Grand Parkway is going  
6 to be built. Additionally, how many acres of wetlands is  
7 this going to affect, issues like that, other wildlife  
8 that will be affected.

9                   Second, the Fort Bend Parkway is going to  
10 intersect in the middle of the Brazos River floodplain  
11 with the Grand Parkway. What's this impact -- what's this  
12 gonna cause on the -- what impact will this cause on the  
13 Grand Parkway? What impact is this gonna have on the  
14 evacuation route for the hurricane? And then how much  
15 secondary development's going to be spawned or assisted by  
16 the Grand Parkway?

17                   The last thing I want to touch on is  
18 Columbia Bottomlands and the Grand Parkway's effect on  
19 Columbia Bottomlands. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife has stated  
20 that the Columbia Bottomlands are very important to our  
21 natural environment. Most of the bottomlands near Lake  
22 Worthington and just east of the lake are going to be  
23 affected. These are going to be fragmented by one of the  
24 proposed segments and there needs to be a full analyzation  
25 on what this fragmenting is going to do to the bottomland.

1                   And I'll be submitting detailed written  
2 comments as well.

3                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

4                   Jerry Lemire and then Don Kocurek.

5                   MR. JERRY LEMIRE: Yeah. My name is Jerry  
6 Lemire and I've -- just to give you a little background of  
7 my personal situation, I moved here from Ohio 20 years ago  
8 and settled in Fort Bend County. I've been a taxpayer in  
9 Fort Bend County for 20 years and I oppose the Grand  
10 Parkway, this segment of the -- I oppose this section of  
11 the Grand Parkway and would not like to see my tax dollars  
12 spent on this segment. And I would -- I am in favor of  
13 the no-build section -- segment of this package.

14                   Just a little bit more about -- I've used  
15 the Brazos Bend State Park. I've camped there. I've -- I  
16 truly enjoyed the experience, the night vision of the  
17 stars. You just don't get that experience in the big  
18 city. I'd hate to see something happen to that  
19 experience.

20                   Thank you.

21                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

22                   Don Kocurek and then Pat Tovsen.

23                   MR. DON KOCUREK: Hi. I'm Don Kocurek. I  
24 was going to pass, but I was listening to everybody speak  
25 and I've heard a lot of wonderful things about saving the

1 wetlands and saving Brazos Bend and wildlife. And those  
2 are all valid things to say. But I look around this room.  
3 A lot of people have left. What about saving the people,  
4 the environment for the people here?

5 I'm one of those people that live here. I'm  
6 very concerned about that. The noise impact, the  
7 pollution impact that this highway, proposed highway can  
8 have on the serenity and peace of mind on the people of  
9 this county ought to be lifted up foremost over anything  
10 that you can see. Please put more emphasis on that.

11 MR. COOPER: Thank you.

12 Pat Tovsen and then Joe Dellinger.

13 MS. PAT TOVSEN: My name is Pat Tovsen. I  
14 want to speak toward the DEIS and the hurricane evacuation  
15 route. If the DEIS is -- the Grand Parkway is so  
16 concerned with the hurricane evacuation route, why didn't  
17 they build a section from Galveston out first rather than  
18 build a middle section first? Why would you put a  
19 hurricane evacuation route through an area that floods 8  
20 to 10 feet? This is a sheet flow flood and all you say is  
21 you will use some sort of hydraulic structure. No more  
22 information is given.

23 You also say you're going to go through 334  
24 acres. That's only actual roadway. There is no studies  
25 done as to the secondary floodplain area. You're going to

1 go through over 20,000 acres of secondary floodplain,  
2 nothing -- no studies have been done on that. Also you  
3 stated you're going to be able to build this bridge or  
4 some sort of hydraulic structure without any significant  
5 impact. That's impossible. When you walk outside, you  
6 have an impact. There has to be an impact. No studies  
7 again done.

8                   This lack of studies is a violation of the  
9 NEPA. Also, you have also never conducted the Fort Bend  
10 Subsidence District. You don't know the area you're  
11 putting through this bridge is going to go through 8 to 10  
12 feet of floodwater for hurricane evacuation. It's going  
13 to sink 3 feet. You've never contacted the Brazos River  
14 Authority, which are the experts in the area. This is  
15 also violation of NEPA, which states that you must involve  
16 all the experts in the area.

17                   Since this will impact our flood zones, you  
18 need to have FEMA involvement. You did not involve FEMA  
19 because you said even though you didn't do any studies  
20 that it wouldn't impact the flood zones. There will be  
21 flood zone impact. This will impact our water supply.  
22 Money, you say -- the only chart I can find says that it  
23 will cost \$270 million to build this section of the Grand  
24 Parkway. That's in 1993 dollars. There are no cumulative  
25 charts listing the money that would go through here. No

1 charts listing how much more it's going to cost to raise  
2 that roadway. A bridge costs a lot more to build than at  
3 ground level. There are no studies that show the increase  
4 in light and noise pollution due to a raised roadway.

5           I don't see how you feel the Grand Parkway  
6 can build a roadway -- a hurricane evacuation route when  
7 the Grand Parkway that has already been built has been  
8 removed as a hurricane evacuation route because it floods  
9 and that is not even in a flood zone. So, what makes you  
10 think you can go through this entire flood zone for  
11 hurricane evacuation when you couldn't do it in an area  
12 that didn't flood?

13           Until you can do studies that show these  
14 impacts, have FEMA involvement and NEPA involvement and  
15 all the other areas that must be involved, I have to  
16 support the no-build option.

17           MR. COOPER: Thank you. Joe Dellinger and  
18 then Dave Jackson.

19           MR. JOE DELLINGER: Well, I should say that  
20 this whole argument seems to be development versus quality  
21 of life, right? So, we all want to have both, right; but  
22 we can't. So, I was forced to move here as I work for an  
23 oil company; but I like to think I'm an environmentalist,  
24 too. So, this gives me major pain to my brain when I'm  
25 sitting there thinking am I helping the world or hurting

1 the world by doing my job?

2                   So, I moved to Houston; and I've lived in a  
3 bunch of different cities in the past. You know, I go out  
4 every morning and I go, "Yuck. The air stinks here. Boy,  
5 I hate this."

6                   So, I -- one of the nicest things I've  
7 discovered in the year I've lived here is the Fort Bend  
8 Astronomy Club. It's fun to go out there and be a nerd  
9 and do stuff with asteroids. Well, that's nice; but it's  
10 also nice just to go to a place where I can breathe the  
11 air, where it's dark, where there are animals. So,  
12 everybody's always saying, "Okay. Oh, but this is Texas.  
13 Now, in Texas, to be a patriotic Texan, development has to  
14 be first above everything else development, development,  
15 development."

16                   Well, I've lived in Silicon Valley. Silicon  
17 Valley is the envy of the nation for their economic  
18 development. My God, in Silicon Valley there are so many  
19 public parks that you could go to a different one every  
20 weekend for three years within an hour's drive and not  
21 repeat. What do they do in Silicon Valley? Well, they  
22 have faults going all through the town. So, they make  
23 nice parks along the fault zones. What do they do in  
24 Houston? There's a major creeping fault going through  
25 west Houston. Called the Long Point Fault. They

1 flattened the area and then put roads all over it and  
2 housing development and they're all getting torn apart.

3 I mean, okay. So, what are you going to do?  
4 You're going to take a beautiful green belt area between  
5 Lake Worthington and Brazos Bend State Park and you're  
6 going to build a hurricane evacuation route through a  
7 floodplain. Does this make sense? I don't think so.

8 Keep away from the park. Keep away from the  
9 floodplain. Keep away from the green belt between Lake  
10 Worthington and Brazos Bend State Park. And don't destroy  
11 our dark skies. I like being a nerd.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. COOPER: Dave Jackson and then Anthony  
14 Nocella.

15 MR. DAVE JACKSON: Pass.

16 MR. COOPER: Dave Jackson passes. Anthony  
17 Nocella.

18 MR. ANTHONY NOCELLA: Right here.

19 Hello. My name is Anthony Nocella, a  
20 resident of Katy area right outside of Houston, west of  
21 Houston. Why does it affect me? I'm a representative of  
22 Earth First Texas, president of the Houston Animal Rights  
23 Team, also a member of the University of St. Thomas  
24 Environmental Club. And if possible finding out on  
25 this -- I just got back from DC just find outing -- find

1 outing about this in a short notice. Rice University  
2 Environmental Club would be here as well; but I'm  
3 representing a lot of individuals, including the ones on  
4 the wall that are holding that banner for an hour already.  
5 And they're not getting paid, unlike some other  
6 individuals here. I would just like to point out a few  
7 facts on why we're here.

8                   Sir, Mr. Jim Darden, he disrespected us  
9 today just because we look different. Is that really nice  
10 because we're in black? Oh, this sounds -- should we get  
11 three fist votes as well? So, anyway, on that issue, I'll  
12 go on to the next issue.

13                   Is this really a beautiful highway? I don't  
14 have to re-utter -- restate what the other  
15 environmentalists have been saying, Sierra Club, Natural  
16 Forest Protection Agency, Alliance. And I can go on with  
17 the list of individuals nationwide that do focus and are  
18 going to start focusing on this issue. It's not a local  
19 issue anymore.

20                   This is state and this is a statewide issue  
21 and so many environmentalists are going to be getting  
22 involved in this issue. If you plan to start, even  
23 thinking about getting this road built or even making a  
24 plan, more than these little maps right here that say,  
25 "Oh, yes. There are no problems. We're not hurting the

1 bald eagle. You know why? We'll just sweep the bald  
2 eagle under the mat," just like George Bush shot the  
3 endangered dove.

4 He said, "Whoops, I didn't know." Well,  
5 whoops, he shouldn't be in that area if he doesn't know.  
6 Okay?

7 Another statement I would like to say about  
8 Earth First. Our issue is that if you would like to go  
9 beyond the plan with the Grand Parkway, which is just  
10 ridiculous in a floodplain -- come on, this is ridiculous.  
11 Just think about it for about a second -- anyway, if you  
12 think about it, there's gonna be a major ruckus, if you  
13 would like to say, compared to the Redwoods against  
14 Charles Hurwitz. And if you like that, hey, go for it.

15 We are going to be knocking on the doors of  
16 representatives of beautiful Tom DeLay and we'll be  
17 knocking on the doors of other representatives. If you  
18 want that, that's fine. We're Earth First and we're not  
19 going anywhere.

20 MR. COOPER: Patrick Kelly and then Rita  
21 Ruth.

22 MR. PATRICK KELLY: Hi. Name is Patrick  
23 Kelly. I'm the pastor of River Pointe Community Church  
24 and on behalf of the 1200 members of our church we'd like  
25 to just read a letter of support for the Grand Parkway but

1 our opposition to Section B1.

2                   It states, I'd like to voice my strong  
3 objections to the proposed routing of the Grand Parkway  
4 known as Section B1 of Segment C. The route B1 would be  
5 longer, much more expensive to build than route A1. Route  
6 B1 would also create a very awkward highway design with  
7 potential safety and traffic flow problems.

8                   The 1200 members of River Point have plans  
9 to construct a church facility within the pathway of the  
10 proposed route B1 in the near future which would precede  
11 the construction of the Grand Parkway. We have over 400  
12 letters here of support for the A1 routing of the Grand  
13 Parkway and in opposition to the B1 routing.

14                   Thank you.

15                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

16                   Rita Ruth and then David Matocha.

17                   MS. RITA RUTH: Okay. I'm Rita Ruth, the  
18 People's Action Coalition and I'm from Channelview. And  
19 you may wonder what I'm doing here. We all have one thing  
20 in common, bad traffic jams. Well, folks, what have we  
21 done and what are we doing? We have already damaged our  
22 planet almost to beyond repair. We are almost to the  
23 point of no return, but it is up to us to make the right  
24 choices. Instead of building more freeways, we should  
25 build more parks, nurture our -- it's my writing. I can't

1 read it -- nurture our wetlands and our coastal  
2 shorelines, protect our flora and fauna at all costs.

3           Do we have a sane solution? Corpus diem,  
4 seize the day. This is an issue of environmental impact  
5 of whose idea has come a long, long time ago.

6           All right. This is -- I read this before  
7 the mayor in Stafford last week. I have been lobbying  
8 for a rail system for the greater Houston area and  
9 counties for many years. So, I want to thank the first --  
10 the Fort Bend mayors for wanting a meeting with Tom DeLay  
11 on this issue. It was only a start but it means that  
12 there is hope for the only sane solution to a desperately  
13 bad situation on our freeways of traffic jams, deadly  
14 accidents, flammable and toxic spills from the big rigs.  
15 If I had my druthers, I would have opted for subway L's on  
16 a monorail system. But we can settle for a commuter  
17 system.

18           Building more freeways means cutting down  
19 more of our precious trees that are not only beautiful but  
20 necessary to our very breath. That means pouring more  
21 concrete, causing more flooding and we lose our tax base  
22 for those who don't give a damn, they only think about  
23 their wallets. Okay? That includes you, too.

24           Some families have two and three vehicles  
25 depleting more of our resources. The pollution that is

1 killing us and our insurance rates are too high. What  
2 with so many people coming in from other countries, states  
3 for jobs and with too many children being born, there can  
4 never, never be enough freeways. What are you gonna do,  
5 build another freeway? I don't think so.

6                   We seem to have plenty of money for  
7 stadiums. So, I know we'll find money for a rail. I am  
8 pushing a rail system. My son says, "Mother, you're  
9 pushing -- the pusher of the neighborhood. What are you  
10 pushing today?" I'm pushing the rail system.

11                   And don't forget how expensive it is to keep  
12 on repairing these freeways. And they are very dangerous  
13 when it rains. So, the jackals responsible for raising  
14 the speed limit to 70 miles should be put in asylum for  
15 the criminally insane. When I drive into the hospital  
16 district on Fannin, I have to leave two hours early  
17 because I have to go around and round trying to find a  
18 parking place and it costs 5 to \$10 to park.

19                   I would love to jump on to the nearest rail  
20 to visit our friends in Stafford, go before the city  
21 council or commissioners in Houston and otherwise, and to  
22 Galveston for Mardi Gras, the beach or the gaming ships  
23 that are coming in very soon.

24                   MR. COOPER: Time.

25                   MS. RUTH: I have -- time? Shame on you.

1 I've got a lot more to say.

2                   Okay. Thank you. I'll submit. I'll  
3 submit.

4                   MR. COOPER: David Matocha and then John  
5 Fischner.

6                   MR. DAVID MATOCHA: Hi. I'm David Matocha.  
7 I was born here in Fort Bend County, lived here most of my  
8 life and kind of like to keep living here for the rest of  
9 it. I'm pretty concerned about the impact the Segment C  
10 is going to have on the quality of life for my family, my  
11 friends and the fellow residents of Fort Bend County.  
12 Basically, from where I stand, I don't see any positive  
13 impacts from this Grand Parkway; and I do see quite a few  
14 negative impacts. But for brevity I'm only going to  
15 mention two.

16                   First, Houston, Texas is recently garnered  
17 the dubious honor and distinction of having the most  
18 polluted air in the United States. I don't want to see  
19 the Grand Parkway driving that polluted air at higher  
20 pollution levels and ozone warnings down into the heart of  
21 Fort Bend County. Second, I have a 7-year-old daughter --  
22 that's what you call a vested interest -- living with me  
23 in Richmond. Several times a month we drive or ride our  
24 bicycles or one way or another we get out to the Brazos  
25 Bend State Park. We view the wildlife, ride bicycles,

1 watch birds, gaze at the stars. Grand Parkway, and  
2 especially Option B, would severely hamper our ability to  
3 enjoy the park, contribute to a light-polluted sky. And I  
4 would really like for my daughter to grow up knowing the  
5 wonder of viewing the night sky, seeing thousands or tens  
6 of thousands of stars and knowing that the Milky Way is  
7 something far more beautiful than a dull gray sky.

8                   Please keep the Grand Parkway far away from  
9 my family and from the best state park around. Thank you  
10 very much.

11                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. John Fischner and  
12 then Frank Jungman.

13                   MS. RUTH: I forgot to tell you we don't  
14 want any minimalizing of impact. We want no impact of any  
15 kind.

16                   MR. JOHN FISCHNER: Okay. My name is John  
17 Fischner and I was born in Houston in 1950. And that was  
18 back when you still could see the stars in Houston and  
19 we've lived out on F.M. 762, 4 miles, roughly, north of  
20 Brazos Bend State Park for the last 22 years. During that  
21 time we watched Brazos Bend State Park be built. During  
22 that time we watched the light pollution and air pollution  
23 increase just from the construction of Brazos Bend State  
24 Park much less what's going -- what is impending.

25                   I'd like to reserve my following comments

1 directly to the map that was handed out this evening and I  
2 won't address the Alternatives 3, 4, 7 and 8 because  
3 they've already been very adequately addressed. Those are  
4 the ones that have the southerly routes to Brazos Bend  
5 State Park.

6                   However, there's something that no one has  
7 particularly brought to anyone's attention and that is the  
8 non-endangered species. The most -- one of the most  
9 common and beautiful species out there is the deer. They  
10 are also potentially the most dangerous. Section A6,  
11 which shows on your map on Alternatives 1, 2 and 5, falls  
12 between Smithers Lake and Brazos Bend State Park and all  
13 those other waterways. The only way for that to have a  
14 completely non-environmental impact is to build the entire  
15 structure as an elevated bridge all the way from 288 to 59  
16 just like the entrance into Louisiana over the swamplands.

17                   That's not practical. The photographs we  
18 looked at weren't going to show it and we can expect it to  
19 be a bizillion-lane highway or whatever. The long and the  
20 short of it is is that the deer, which number in the  
21 thousands, do not stay within the confines of Brazos Bend  
22 State Park. They migrate back and forth several times a  
23 year from Smithers Lake and back into the safety of Brazos  
24 Bend State Park. And at 5,000 cars a day, Section A6 is  
25 never going to be safe. It's not going to be a safe place

1 for anyone to drive.

2                   Anyone who drives across the Interstate 10  
3 south of Kerrville -- north of Kerrville on your way into  
4 the arid desert areas of Texas knows what it's like to see  
5 a deer killed every mile. Now, you see a deer killed on a  
6 rain-slick highway with the kind of weather conditions we  
7 have in this part of Texas, you're going to see people  
8 killed along with it or you're going to see people killed  
9 instead of it.

10                   This is not a good idea for a whole lot of  
11 reasons. It's not a good idea because of the floodplains.  
12 It's not a good idea because there is no way this can keep  
13 from inter -- interfering with Big Creek bridge -- with  
14 Big Creek and that floodplain.

15                   MR. COOPER: Time.

16                   MR. FISCHNER: Don't build it.

17                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

18                   Frank Jungman and then Thane DePuey.

19                   MR. FRANK JUNGMAN: My name is Frank  
20 Jungman. My grandfather bought property in Fort Bend  
21 County, oh, about 15 years before I was born and I'm 71  
22 years of age. I've been coming down here over 60 years.  
23 I've been investing in the county and have been  
24 appraising, brokering and analyzing the county for well  
25 over 40 years.

1 I have -- don't believe that the -- that the  
2 project is economically feasible as it stands to build it.  
3 But if it is built, I address myself along with the church  
4 because on the northerly segment north of 762, as did the  
5 church man, who asked that you not build it on Segments  
6 B1, C1, C2 and C3 of -- of the overall study.

7 First of all, U.S. 59 is to become I-69.  
8 You have not taken that into account. They already have  
9 said they must widen the right-of-way of U.S. 59. So, if  
10 you build it along the north line of U.S. 59, when I-69 is  
11 built, you must come down south of that. You must  
12 coordinate these particular undertakings so that you take  
13 into account the fact that they -- just as somebody was  
14 saying that there is another project in the area that will  
15 be involved.

16 B1, C1, C2 and C3, as the minister said,  
17 appear to be longer than the westerly route -- excuse  
18 me -- route -- longer than the easterly route and this  
19 requires more right-of-way, more right-of-way costs and a  
20 great deal more construction costs. You're building on an  
21 area of 4 or \$5 million a mile. You probably extend it  
22 about 4 miles. Cost you about \$20 million more.

23 The environmental impact should include  
24 sociological -- socioeconomic factors, as some of the  
25 people have pointed out. This means the impact on humans

1 in the area now and humans who may be here later on. This  
2 was an important part that I got -- point that I got to --  
3 under consideration in the Harris County Flood Control  
4 Task Force, of which I was once a member.

5           Delayed development in the westerly course  
6 has been intentional and you -- your vacillation by the  
7 Grand Parkway Association, as you know, in the past cost  
8 the Texas Department of Transportation millions of dollars  
9 in rights-of-way and damages in subsequent lawsuits and  
10 you're about to do that again to the detriment of all the  
11 taxpayers in the state of Texas, not just those promoting.

12           Lastly, the major thoroughfare plans have  
13 always called for an extension of Benton Road into the  
14 William Wire interchange. There have been measures taken  
15 in that direction to extend the Benton Road into William  
16 Wire interchange -- I will be through in about ten  
17 seconds.

18           MR. COOPER: Time.

19           MR. JUNGMAN: -- and that the -- you would  
20 undertake to deny this -- these easements are owned in  
21 common by the people who front that road and you would be  
22 taking something from them and they would be entitled to  
23 damages.

24           Thank you.

25           MR. COOPER: Thane DePuey and Ben Wohlford.

1 Thane DePuey?

2 Ben Wohlford and then Jewel Lovel.

3 MR. BEN WOHLFORD: My name is Ben Wohlford  
4 and I'm a concerned citizen. I have three points in my  
5 oral comments I'd like to make. The third one, of course,  
6 is the most important. The first one's concerning the  
7 most southern route of F.M. 1462 and I'd like to discuss  
8 that because of policies and procedures. The Grand  
9 Parkway Association took the liberty to eliminate  
10 F.M. 1462 as a proposed alternative before the public had  
11 any chance to respond. I just want to know if that's  
12 against public policies and procedures.

13 The three points made to eliminate F.M. 1462  
14 were the dark skies, historical plantations and that there  
15 were commercial and residential sites. Well, the road  
16 really doesn't affect the dark skies. It's the  
17 residential development. The historical plantations are  
18 not historic sites. So, they shouldn't be considered as  
19 such and if you -- if you've ever really personally driven  
20 down F.M. 1462 there are hardly any commercial and  
21 residential sites on that road anyway. I'd welcome a  
22 written response that justifies these actions.

23 My second point is -- concerns Texas Parks &  
24 Wildlife's recommendation to the Proposition D, I do  
25 believe, which uses F.M. 2759 and that's -- that would be

1 like a most northerly route which uses the Burlington  
2 Railroad. I think this would be the most reasonable  
3 alternative if one has to be built because it uses  
4 existing right-of-ways. It minimal -- it has minimal  
5 environmental impact because there's no separation between  
6 the woodlands and prairies from Smithers Lake to the Lake  
7 Worthington area and, finally, to the Brazos Bend State  
8 Park. I welcome this alternative to be added.

9                   My third point and most important point is  
10 the simplest solution of all -- I have a real simple  
11 solution and it has the most minimal environmental impact  
12 and that would be not to have a Segment C.

13                   Earth First.

14                   MR. COOPER: Thank you. Jewel Lovel.

15                   MS. JEWEL LOVEL: My name is Jewel Lovel. I  
16 was born and raised and currently live in Fort Bend  
17 County. I heard tonight that one of the reasons for  
18 building the Grand Parkway is to increase residential and  
19 commercial development. This increase in development in  
20 Segment C is in direct conflict with the long-term  
21 viability of Brazos Bend State Park and the George  
22 Observatory and from what I heard tonight is not supported  
23 by the residents of the area.

24                   The Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
25 does not adequately address impacts this freeway will have

1 on Brazos Bend State Park. To say there will be no  
2 impacts is simply not true. It does not accurately  
3 address the hardwood forests that exist along all the  
4 southern Options H, J, T or Option B. The Draft  
5 Environmental Impact Statement does not adequately address  
6 the increase in area flooding that will result from  
7 building this freeway. It does not address subsidence  
8 issues. There are a number of concerns that are just not  
9 addressed adequately.

10 I will close by saying that once this  
11 freeway's built and these issues become commonplace  
12 problems then Fort Bend County will be left to deal with  
13 these problems without financial assistance from the Grand  
14 Parkway Association, from TxDOT or from federal highways.

15 I am not in favor of building the Grand  
16 Parkway and especially in it being located near Brazos  
17 Bend State Park. Thank you.

18 MR. COOPER: Thank you.

19 Vanessa Cowart then Rebecca Junker.

20 MS. VANESSA COWART: A gentleman actually  
21 touched on my comment.

22 MR. COOPER: Okay. Rebecca Junker.

23 MS. REBECCA JUNKER: Thank you.

24 My maiden name is Beard. My siblings and I,  
25 my aunts and uncles, my first cousins, my second cousins,

1 my third cousins, own most of the land on the west side of  
2 Sawmill Road to -- contiguous to the state park. This  
3 land was part of the original Spanish land grant given to  
4 my great-great-grandfather which he settled Texas as part  
5 of Austin's original 300. This is the area where Texas  
6 began.

7                   Our ranch, the Beard Ranch, with all of my  
8 cousins, has been in continuous agricultural production  
9 since 1832. We have been adding neighbors for the last  
10 168 years. These neighbors, particularly the park, has  
11 been a fantastic neighbor. The wildlife are obviously  
12 wonderful neighbors and even all these new folks, these  
13 new human beings in this group, are wonderful neighbors.

14                   However, I do not believe that a freeway  
15 will make a wonderful neighbor. I have listened to  
16 everything they said. I cannot add anymore to it, but I  
17 urge you not to build a freeway through some of the most  
18 beautiful land in the state of Texas.

19                   MR. COOPER: Thank you.

20                   Are there any other people who would like to  
21 present comments at this time?

22                   If there's no one else that would like to  
23 present comments, I would like to thank each of you for  
24 your comments tonight. Your comments will be included in  
25 the minutes of this meeting and will be a part of the

1 official record of the completed EIS.

2                   Again, if you would like to present comments  
3 in writing, you may do so by completing a written comment  
4 form. We have the forms back at the back table or you may  
5 mail them to us by July 13th, 2000. If you want to mail  
6 your comments, the address is available at the  
7 registration table or on the forms.

8                   We anticipate holding a public workshop for  
9 this to announce a selection for the preferred  
10 alternative. Newsletters will be mailed out prior to the  
11 workshop to inform you -- to inform individuals of the --  
12 of the exact time and location of the workshop. If you  
13 are not on the mailing list and would like to be included  
14 on it, please make sure that you were signed in at this  
15 meeting. All individuals that have signed in at this  
16 meeting will be added to the mailing list.

17                   Again, thank you for your attendance and  
18 input. Be careful driving home tonight. Thank you and  
19 good night.

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1 STATE OF TEXAS

2

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

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

11

12

13 Stephanie J. McClure, CSR, RPR  
14 CSR No. 3483; Expiration: 12-31-99  
2019 South Mission Circle  
Friendswood, Texas 77546

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17 My Notary Commission expires February 13, 2001.

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