



Citizens' Transportation Coalition

Tuesday, April 3, 2007

Honorable Mike Krusee, Chair
Transportation Committee, Room E2.130
Texas House of Representatives

RE: **Oppose HB 1813**: election of METRO board members

Chairman & Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the board and members of the Citizens' Transportation Coalition (CTC), I urge you to **oppose HB 1813** which calls for direct election of METRO board members.

METRO's nine-member board is currently appointed by each of the local governments within its service area. Today, 16 elected authorities – the City of Houston, Harris County, and 14 smaller municipalities – collectively hold METRO board members accountable and insist on effective service that is directly coordinated with the region's broader transportation network.

As an example, when Houston Mayor Bill White developed a policy to improve mobility through the city by synchronizing traffic signals on major east-west thoroughfares, elected city leaders were able to work directly with their appointed METRO board members to ensure METRO's cooperation with the initiative.

While CTC is very much in favor of expanding the power of our franchise and democracy in general, HB 1813 fails to accomplish this. As submitted, HB 1813 proposes to take the current system of accountability to directly elected officials, and replace it with an alternate system of special interests funded by those with the most to profit from eating at the public trough. Nowhere in HB 1813 is there a mechanism to mandate and ensure the regional perspective and cooperation that are vital to make METRO successful. HB 1813 is a recipe for bad public policy.

Within Houston, the Port of Houston Authority and METRO are governed by appointed boards. These boards are charged with managing professional agencies with staffs who possess highly-specialized skills. Houston's elected leaders have depended on appointed members of these boards since their inception. The result is a world-class port responsible for more than one fifth of the regions' economic output, and a transit agency that has implemented one of the best commuter transit systems in the country and one of the most successful light rail lines in the country. It's no wonder that the same appointed board structure was chosen for the soon to be created Harris County Freight Rail District.

In contrast, two local boards are elected directly: Houston ISD and Houston Community College. Both have a history of severe management issues and struggle to function effectively. At the rate Houston is growing, we cannot afford for our transit agency to suffer a similar fate. Please don't try to fix something that isn't broken. Please oppose HB 1813.

Thanks and best regards,
Robin Holzer, Chair

About CTC

The Citizens' Transportation Coalition (CTC) is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit transportation advocacy organization. CTC is committed to engaging Houstonians in the planning of transportation projects that affect them.

www.ctchouston.org

CTC envisions transportation solutions that improve quality of life