

# Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 191

P. O. Box 11890  
Spring, TX 77391-1890

December 13, 2016

Sunset Advisory Commission  
Attn: Amy Tripp  
Via email to: sunset@sunset.texas.gov  
P. O. Box 13066  
Austin, TX 78711

Subject: Sunset Staff Report, Texas Department of Transportation (November 2016)

Dear Sunset Advisory Commission:

We have reviewed the staff report, and we offer this letter as further comment from the public hearing held December 9. Regarding Issue 1, we strongly support the basic objective of making the transportation planning process more transparent and performance-based as envisioned by the 2015 transportation reform bill (House Bill 20). Based upon months of experience with TxDOT projects planned for the Houston area, we have become convinced that state law should be further strengthened to make sure that projects are selected in accordance with state transportation policy. For this purpose, we recommend that Chapter 201 of the Transportation Code be amended to:

- (1) Require metropolitan planning organizations to independently calculate the benefits and costs of all large mobility projects (\$10 million or larger). The following standards would apply to benefit and cost calculations:
  - a. Benefit and cost categories would be selected for functional equivalency, to make sure the resulting benefit-cost ratios are directly comparable from project to project, across-the-board.
  - b. Measures of benefits must be current and based on data applicable to each project, so that projected benefits of a project have a high probability of being realized as a direct result of that project. Benefits related to statewide or regional transportation goals (e.g., connectivity, hurricane evacuation, pedestrian safety, bicycle access, transit support) must be estimated and included in the calculation, based on current, realistic units (in dollars) applied uniformly to all projects.
  - c. Costs must include not only direct costs of engineering, construction and property acquisition but also costs of delay and disruption during construction and any uncompensated costs borne by affected property owners and utilities.
  
- (2) Require that large mobility projects be ranked and selected for funding in descending order of their benefit-cost ratios, calculated as specified above. This should apply to all projects selected for funding on or after September 1, 2017, except: (a) a metropolitan planning organization may apply the specified ranking and selection criteria to previously-selected projects, and (b) a metropolitan planning organization must apply such criteria to a previously-selected project, if requested by resolution or order adopted by the governing body of an affected taxing unit.

Sincerely,

HARRIS COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 191

By:  Edward A. Monto, President