Houston Neighborhood Greenways
A Houston Tomorrow Proposal - June 2013

Houston is building what would be the largest off-street hike/bike network in the nation if it were completed today. Unfortunately children in many nearby neighborhoods cannot safely walk or bike to it. As an initial step toward Complete Streets, the Neighborhood Greenways approach will efficiently provide massive numbers of Houstonians safe access to our Bayou Greenways project, along with other parks, jobs, schools, and all the elements of the quality of life in the Houston region we all seek.

We propose duplicating the City of Portland Neighborhood Greenways program that is connecting 85% of households in that city to a safe hike and bike network in 5 years for $50 million, the cost of one mile of urban freeway. Houston could connect the inner loop and the equally populated area to the west of the loop for $100 million, 1% of the region’s four year Transportation Improvement Program. We are convening a workgroup to develop a proposal for the next TIP Call for Projects, regionally discretionary transportation funds to be allocated in the spring of 2015.

Portland used water quality funding to install a network across the city. They first identify low automobile traffic streets, and then design a grid network of connected safe streets that everyone knows are safe. Simple cheap infrastructure, such as green water-cleaning swales in bulb-outs at the end of the blocks, speed humps, and street trees are used to ensure motorists travel as speeds safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The State of Oregon has even established a new 20 mph speed limit for these streets.

The workgroup will pursue two or three pilot Neighborhood Greenways projects to explore the concept in a diversity of neighborhoods and urban designs. It has been suggested that Montrose, Museum Park, and the Briarforest areas might be good places to start, with an initial focus on safe connections to schools, possibly Lanier Middle School and the HCC Central Campus.

The map at right is a simple attempt to show how such a network might be laid out for Neartown and Upper Kirby, but we believe that neighborhoods should have the primary role in defining how this safe grid should connect their areas with guidance by the City of Houston and an emphasis on tying the grid together across the City and connecting key sites.

For more information or to get involved in the workgroup, please contact Jay Blazek Crossley at jay.crossley@houstontomorrow.org or 713-523-5757. http://www.houstontomorrow.org