Complete Streets and Prop1/Renew Houston – Dec 7, 2010

Materials

- Five reasons Houston should design and build complete streets
- Houston examples of roadway redesign
- CTC resolution of support for transportation alternatives
- *Cite* issue 72 article, “Street Talk: Rethinking the space between buildings can accommodate growth

Meeting participants

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About the Citizens’ Transportation Coalition

The Citizens’ Transportation Coalition (CTC) is an all-volunteer, grassroots advocacy organization based in Houston, with members across the 8-county Houston-Galveston region. Since 2004, CTC volunteers have worked to engage neighborhood leaders in the planning of transportation projects that affect our neighborhoods.

About AARP Texas

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50 and over improve the quality of their lives. As the nation’s largest membership organization for people 50+, AARP is leading a revolution in the way people view and live life.
5 reasons Houston should design & build complete streets

Constrained right-of-way

While the City of Houston Infrastructure Design Manual is targeted for greenfield construction of new suburbs, many streets through existing Houston neighborhoods have limited rights-of-way. Context-sensitive design will allow engineers to balance the interests of all roadway users within the space available.

Traffic safety

The Houston region, which includes Baytown and Sugarland, ranks as the eighth most dangerous area in the country for pedestrians, according to the report, Dangerous by Design: Solving the Epidemic of Preventable Pedestrian Deaths (and Making Great Neighborhoods). Houston is also the most-dangerous region in Texas.

In 2007-2008 in Houston 206 pedestrians were killed, comprising 17.4% of all traffic deaths.

Speed is a major factor in fatal crashes. At 20 mph, 80% of pedestrians will survive a crash with a vehicle. At 40 mph, only 20% of pedestrians will live.

According to the Dangerous by Design report, many pedestrian deaths occur on arterial roadways, designed for 45 mph or higher. By designing complete streets for moderate speeds, reserving right of way for pedestrians and cyclists, and including safe pedestrian crossings, Texas can reduce crash risk for everyone.

Vulnerable users

One in five adult Texans cannot drive. In Harris County alone more than 100,000 households have no car. All of these Houstonians must travel by other means.

Support local businesses

More walking and slower drive speeds mean more impressions and more business. Further, residential real estate studies have found that each 1 point increase in WalkScore translates into $500 - $3,000 increase in home values.

Low cost for big benefits

Building a great pedestrian environment requires only a small capital investment for large increases in roadway capacity. Further, public investment in pedestrian and bicycle facilities supports existing public investments in transit facilities and schools.
Downtown Transit Streets created a quality pedestrian environment

From 1998-2005, METRO reconstructed 14 streets in Downtown and Midtown to add new pavement, storm drainage, sidewalks, street trees, street furniture, and bus stops. The project cost $298 million with 80% funding from the Federal Transit Administration.

Milam Street downtown: used to allocate 52 feet to 5 vehicle lanes.

Milam Street: now carries all vehicles in just 3 lanes, freeing up ample sidewalks space for pedestrians and transit users.
Cotswold Project created parking to create activity

In 2003, the City of Houston and the Downtown Management District spent $62 mm to convert 3 travel lanes to head-in parking, parallel parking, new sidewalks, and public art.

Prairie Street: used to have 5 vehicle lanes in 52 feet.

Prairie Street: now supports more activity with the help of abundant on-street parking
Post Properties in Midtown created walkable urbanism

Webster St: traded a vehicle lane for on-street parallel parking and curb bulb-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

Gray St: City and developer partnered to ensure a vibrant public space for people.
Sidewalks matter

Holman at Main: Just one block from a busy light rail station, pedestrians encounter narrow, broken sidewalks like this one.

Gessner at Kingsride: Brand new sidewalks are obstructed from the outset by traffic control boxes, signs, utility poles, and street trees.
Curb Radii matter: must balance vehicle turns with pedestrian safety

The City of Houston’s current roadway design manual is intended for greenfield construction of new suburban streets. When we reconstruct existing urban streets with these standards, we often make them worse rather than better.

Van Buren and Peden: The original intersection of is still friendly to pedestrians, with perpendicular curb ramps and short crossing distances.

Van Buren at Willard: The rebuilt intersection of traded corner pedestrian refuges for longer crossing distances and much faster vehicle turns.
Van Buren at Willard: City reconstruction with larger curb radii created much longer in-street crossing distances for pedestrians

Dunlavy at West Gray: A mix of public and private obstructions make the sidewalk impassable