



# COUNCIL MEMBER OLIVER PENNINGTON

## DISTRICT G

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March 6, 2013

Transportation Public Information  
Houston-Galveston Area Council  
P.O. Box 22777  
Houston, TX 77227-2777

Re: Memorial Drive Reconstruction—2013-2016 TIP Call for Projects

Gentlemen:

Please consider this letter as the strongest possible public support for the Memorial Drive Reconstruction Project (from N. Eldridge Parkway to Kirkwood Road), submitted as part of the 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Project Call for Projects. As you are no doubt aware, an apparent miscommunication between staff at the City of Houston and staff for H-GAC resulted in this project receiving a Benefit/Cost Score of 0, which resulted in this project being relegated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier (“Funding Recommendation Possible”).

The project is likely to result in significant system-level vehicular delay reductions, emissions reductions, as well as increased mobility, safety and clean air in the area.

While the project does not plan to increase the number of lanes of Memorial Drive, improvements to the three main intersections’ operations, such as added turn lanes and traffic signal coordination at Kirkwood @ Memorial, Dairy Ashford @ Memorial and Eldridge Parkway @ Memorial, as well as the addition of a median with left turn lanes will provide significant benefits to area residents and those who use this roadway for access to their jobs in the Energy Corridor Management District. The City’s Public Works and Engineering Department believes that the major benefit to be obtained will occur at these three intersections during the peak periods. There is a huge benefit to be realized by shortening delays. There is also a huge benefit to be realized by reducing emissions, and improving the air quality in the area. There is also likely to be a reduction in the number of accidents that occur on this stretch of roadway, saving lives, money and property.

In addition, Memorial Drive is the only arterial thoroughfare that parallels I-10 from the far west side all the way into Downtown. HPD and the Houston Office of Homeland Security consider Memorial to be a viable evacuation route out of Downtown. Memorial is also heavily utilized by motorists whenever there is an incident on I-10 and even during more routine congestion.

There are also safety considerations that will be addressed by the modified roadway. There are a number of Spring Branch ISD schools that are located on this stretch of Memorial Drive, and others that are in the immediate vicinity. The pedestrian and bike-friendly changes that will come with this reconstruction project will provide a much safer route for children to walk or bike to school.

The schools in the area include:

- Meadow Wood Elementary School, 14230 Memorial Drive 77079
- Technology Training Center, 14330 Memorial Drive, 77079
- Spring Forest Middle School, 14240 Memorial Drive, 77079
- Nottingham Elementary School, 570 Nottingham Oaks, 77079
- Thornwood Elementary School, 14400 Fern, 77079
- Stratford Senior High School, 14555 Fern, 77079

This area is the fastest growing real estate submarket in the city. There are a number of large construction projects already underway in this area that will dramatically increase the traffic volumes within the next couple of years. Currently, the following projects are under construction:

- City Center IV (123,000 square feet)
- City Center III 100,000 sq. ft.)
- Nexen Energy (332,000 sq. ft.)
- Murphy Building (320,000 sq. ft.)
- Shell (670,000 sq. ft.)
- Energy Tower III (450,000 sq. ft.)

There are three more large office buildings planned for construction starting this fall:

- Mason Creek Office Center (135,000 sq. ft.)
- Westgate (660,000 sq. ft.)
- Energy Crossing II (240,000 sq. ft.)

Further, while they do not yet have a firm date for construction, there are several other projects that are likely to proceed shortly in this area:

- Energy Center III, IV & V (1,000,000 sq. ft.)
- 15375 Memorial (Skanska) (750,000 sq. ft.)
- Eldridge Oaks II (350,000 sq. ft.)
- Greenhouse Office Park (250,000 sq. ft.)
- Woodbranch Park (350,000 sq. ft.)
- Piedmont REIT (300,000 sq. ft.)
- City Center V (123,000 sq. ft.)
- Town Center I (250,000 sq. ft.)

Together, these projects are expected to account for an additional 11,000 jobs in this immediate area. Additional capacity on Memorial Drive will thus become critical in the next few years.

In addition, there are approximately 1,000 apartment units either currently being constructed or to begin in 2013 in this immediate area, which will create additional congestion on this roadway.

We are submitting this letter strongly supporting this project for the reasons stated above and to give the citizens of this area an opportunity to comment on the Memorial Drive project design. Please include this project in the 2013-2016 TIP and give it the appropriate Benefit/Cost score.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Oliver Pennington". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Oliver Pennington