



**YOU CAN'T
PAVE
OVER
US!**

Fighting the I-45 Expansion

G L O S S A R Y

Accessibility - the practice of making information/activities/environments as sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible. (source: seewritehear.com)

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

Displacement - the process of forcing people or communities to leave the place where they live or work, often due to economic or social pressures such as rising property values, development, or natural disasters.

H-GAC - Houston-Galveston Area Council. The Houston region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) who distributes federal and state funds for large initiatives.

EIS - Environmental Impact Statement. A document outlining all the impacts of a proposed project on things like housing, tax revenue, flooding, wildlife, air quality, and connectivity.

Environmental Racism - the disproportionate and unjust exposure of certain communities, often marginalized or minority groups, to environmental hazards, pollution, and degradation.

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

Grassroots - movement by ordinary people using collective action to enact change.

Induced Demand - the phenomenon where increasing the supply of a transportation facility, such as a road or highway, leads to an increase in the demand for that facility, often resulting in more traffic and congestion.

MOU - Memorandum Of Understanding. A formal document that outlines an agreement between parties, but is not legally binding.

NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act. Federal law determining environmental review processes and acceptable impacts for a proposed project.

SVI - Social Vulnerability Index. This scores a census tract based on a number of factors from poverty to housing availability and infrastructure accessibility. SVI can be used to identify communities who are at-risk in a hazardous situation or will need additional support after one.

Title VI - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects communities from discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin by a project using federal funding.

Transit Justice - the equitable distribution of transportation resources and services, such as public transit, to ensure that all members of a community have safe, affordable, and convenient access to essential destinations such as jobs, schools, healthcare, and social services.

TTC - Texas Transportation Commission. The governing body of TxDOT, appointed by the Governor.

Urban Infill - the process of developing or redeveloping vacant or underused parcels of land within an existing urban area, often in denser or mixed-use configurations that complement or enhance the surrounding built environment.

Urban Sprawl - the rapid expansion of urban areas, resulting in the growth of low-density, single-use development patterns that consume large amounts of land and often rely on automobile transportation.

UTP - Unified Transportation Program. TxDOT's 10-year plan for projects.

VMT - Vehicle Miles Traveled

VRA - An agreement between an agency of the federal government and another agency or institution subject to federal jurisdiction. A common way to resolve civil rights complaints. Describes the specific remedial actions that the recipient will undertake to address issues identified in the investigation.

Why don't **WIDER HIGHWAYS** fix traffic?

Growing population in a region is the primary reason a DOT will claim they should be allowed to expand a highway

→ when they widen the freeway, existing housing and land is paved over; livable spaces become concrete.

→ when the wider road opens, there's more room for cars, so more people start to drive on it.

The road fills up with more cars and traffic becomes worse than before. This cycle is called induced demand.

→ as housing inside the city is destroyed, more people are forced to live further outside the city. People who infrequently used the freeway while living within the city become daily commuters.

Housing is continually destroyed inside the city and rebuilt outside it. This cycle is called sprawl.

As long as we build our cities around cars, we will be forced to keep driving. We must create usable and accessible living space so residents can live close to their communities, resources, workplaces, and amenities.

So... what does work?

- **Community-led solutions** like participatory budgeting, community planning, and advocacy, can ensure that transportation solutions reflect the needs and priorities of all community members!
- **Multi-modal transit** that gets people out of their cars, and drastically decreases pollution
- **Affordable Housing** near multi-modal transit means fewer people need cars to regularly get where they're going.
- **Designing Complete Streets** that prioritize the safety and comfort of all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users
- **Grass and Greenspace**, which create clean air and mitigate flooding
- **Integrating housing, retail, community spaces, healthcare hubs**, to help build thriving communities that meet residents' needs without long or frequent car trips.



Eerste van der Helststraat, 1978
(Source: Amsterdam Archives)



Eerste van der Helststraat, 2016
(Source: Thomas Schlijper)

Which Houston street would you like to see closed to cars and transformed into a fully livable and enjoyable space?

Amsterdam (above), is the poster child for a walkable, bikeable, accessible city center. Did you know it wasn't always like this? City planners chose to convert car space into livable space and undo the car-centric design of the 70s!

NHHIP at a Glance

INDEPENDENCE HEIGHTS

Independence Heights was incorporated in 1915, becoming the first Black municipality in Texas. By 1960, the construction of the 610 loop paved over 250 homes in Independence Heights. Independence Heights will lose 165 homes to the I-45 expansion.

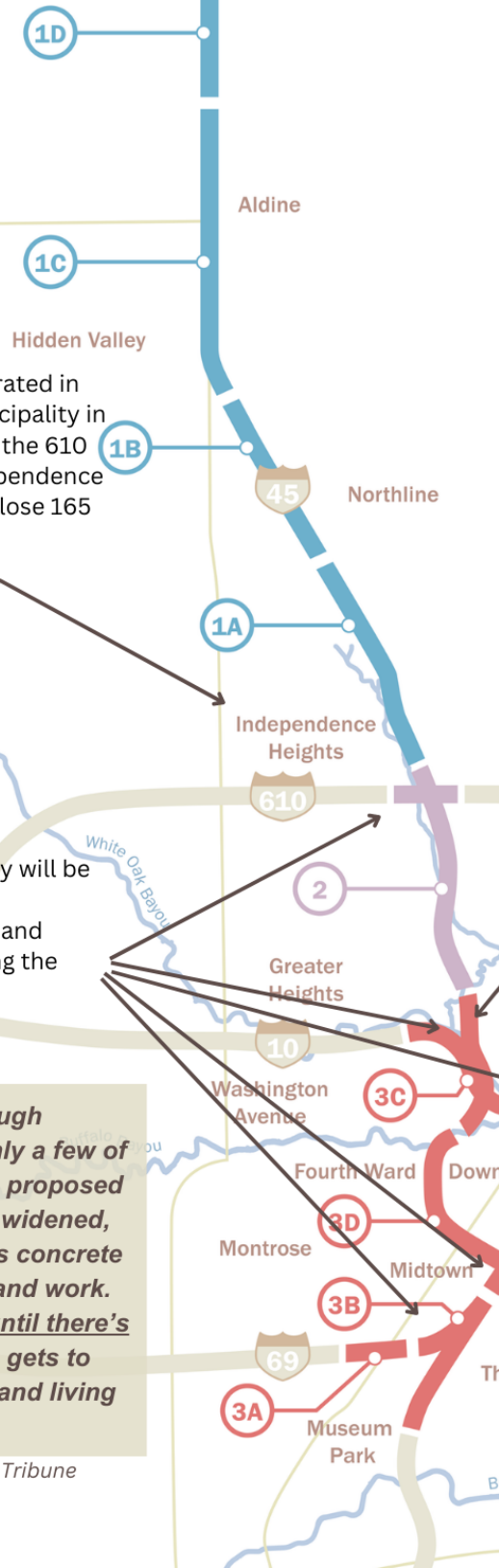
When was the last time and place you went outside and couldn't hear a freeway?

INTERCHANGES

Every interchange inside the beltway will be affected by more than a decade of construction, disrupting bus routes and everyday travel for those living along the existing freeways

Every freeway goes through SOMEWHERE, and these are only a few of the far-reaching impacts of this proposed expansion. When a freeway is widened, the land on either side becomes concrete instead of places to live, play, and work. Is the end goal to keep paving until there's no one left to displace? Who gets to decide when the paving stops and living can begin again?

Sources: TXDOT NHHIP FEIS 2020, Texas Tribune



→ **Replacing livable spaces with concrete is a choice. To expand I-45, TxDOT is choosing to pave over**

- **1235 homes housing thousands of Houstonians**
- **331 businesses employing between 4,800 and 13,700 Houstonians**
- **2 schools**
- **5 houses of worship**
- **5 nonprofits providing support to low-income families and unhoused Houstonians**
- **Immeasurable history, resources, and community support networks**

WHITE OAK BAYOU

34 lanes will cross over White Oak Bayou and the bayou trail, which are teeming with life from alligator gar and coastal birds to people like you and me. How do you think they will be affected by the noise, pollution, and construction?

FIFTH WARD

Fifth Ward was divided and diminished by the construction of I-10 in the 1950s, followed by the construction of US 59/I-69. As I-45 and its interchanges with these other freeways are widened, Fifth Ward will be further paved over .

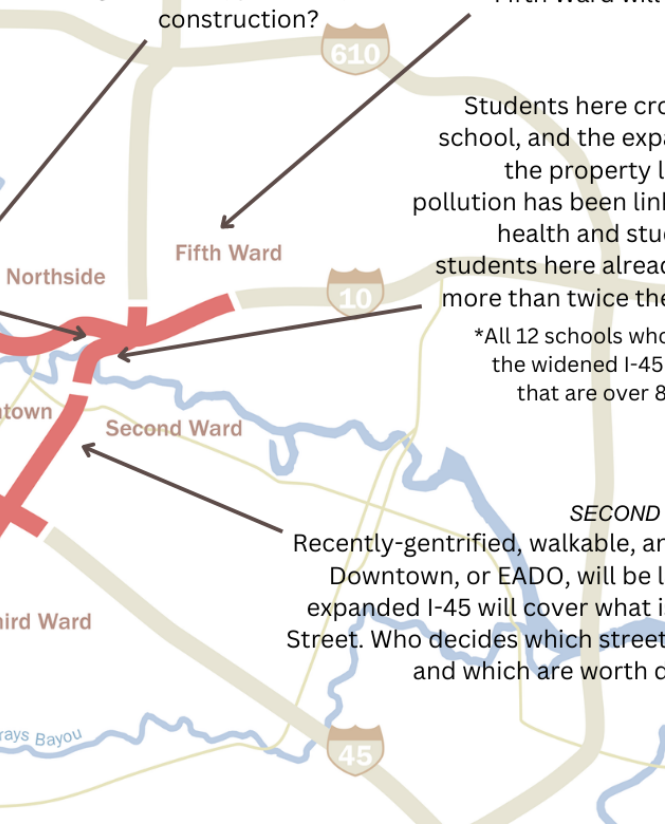
BRUCE ELEMENTARY

Students here cross 2 highways to get to school, and the expansion will bring I-45 to the property line of their campus. Air pollution has been linked to poor community health and student outcomes. 7.2% of students here already suffer from asthma - more than twice the HISD average of 3.5%.

*All 12 schools who will be within 500 feet of the widened I-45 have student populations that are over 85% Black and/or Hispanic.

SECOND WARD/EAST DOWNTOWN

Recently-gentrified, walkable, and transit-oriented East Downtown, or EADO, will be largely demolished. The expanded I-45 will cover what is currently St. Emanuel Street. Who decides which streets are worth developing and which are worth demolishing, and when?



ELDA REYES



“Hola, mi nombre es Elda Reyes. Esta es mi casa. Vivo aquí en la calle Ishmael, cerca de un bloque de 45 norte y pues, con la construcción del aumento para el freeway, pues, nosotros nos vemos directamente afectados porque somos los que vivimos al final de esta calle.

Como ven, mi casa, no es una casa muy grande, pero nosotros

tenemos aquí ya 16 años de vivir en está casa. La terminamos de pagar, gracias a Dios. Entonces nos sentimos muy contentos de estar viviendo aquí. Y este proyecto que están haciendo nos afecta directamente, porque para nosotros, buscar otra casa, buscar otro vecindario donde nosotros nos podamos sentir a gusto y seguros, pues, es muy difícil para nosotros. Y empezar una nueva deuda con una casa es también algo que nosotros no queremos porque estamos en una edad en que no podemos tener tiempo para tener otra deuda y volver a empezar con otro pago.

Entonces, para nosotros es bien importante que busquen las autoridades encargadas de ampliar el 45, otra manera de solucionar el problema del tráfico. No solamente ampliando van a afectar muchas familias como a nosotros – no solamente somos nosotros, sino que **son un montón de familias que viven cerca del freeway que se verían directamente afectadas.”**

————— *(Translated to English)* —————

“Hello, my name is Elda Reyes. This is my home. I live here on Ishmael Street, about a block from I-45 North and well, with the construction of the expansion of the freeway, we are directly affected because we are the ones who live at the end of this street.

As you can see, my house is not a very big house, but we have lived in this house for 16 years. We finished paying for it, thank God. So we feel very happy to be living here. And this project that they are doing affects us directly, because for us, looking for another house, looking for another neighborhood where we can feel comfortable and safe, well, it is very difficult for us. And starting a new debt with a house is also something that we do not want because we are at an age where we cannot have time to have another debt and start over with another payment.

So, for us it is very important that the authorities in charge of expanding I-45 look for another way to solve the traffic problem. Expanding will not only affect many families like us – it’s not just us, but **it’s a lot of families that live near the freeway that would be directly affected.”**

SEAN JEFFERSON

“When they come and do the groundbreaking, home is not going to be home because some of these condos that’s over here are three hundred, four hundred thousand bucks and that’s not affordable to us right now. I mean, I remember when I first moved into this house it was \$64,000 and that was pretty much affordable, you know? Now the property taxes are up and they’re building a lot and everything is just super expensive right now.

I don’t want to go in and have to start over on a mortgage at zero dollars and start paying off a three hundred fifty thousand dollar home. You know, I’m already almost halfway at paying this house off and it’s just gonna be horrible for us right now.

I haven’t had any interaction. **TXDOT hasn’t did anything but come and do a survey and send a letter in the mail saying that ‘we’re going to be taking this land for a freeway project.’ I mean, they had someone come to a meeting but they’re just explaining the process of what’s going to happen. Not trying to get any kind of community input, not trying to understand that the stories here on this on this feeder.**

There’s always something else right here and then the something else comes from not being able to be fully engaged in a lot of plans that the city or the state has. You know, they always have these major plans but they don’t have enough community feedback. **They don’t even seek the community feedback that they should and it just creates a lot of terrible situations for a lot of the families that don’t have anything. You know, I think they should involve us a lot more in a lot of their plans, especially this one that’s coming up. They should involve a lot of the residents up and down [I-45] you know they should have and they didn’t.**

I guess they don’t care about the opinion just because of the predominantly Black community that we live in, they don’t think people are educated enough or know enough or have enough money to fight against it so they just say, ‘Okay well we don’t need it, we’re just going to plan without their permission, and we’re just going to continue what we’re doing without even worrying about what they have to say. They don’t have any say. You know it has to be that way because **they always plan and do things without any kind of engagement with us.”**



*These interviews were recorded in 2020 by LINK Houston and Stop TxDOT I-45.
To hear more stories from the right-of-way, visit i45expansionimpacts.org.*

UPDATE: THE LEGAL BATTLES FOR CHANGES TO THE I-45 EXPANSION

In 2021, two separate legal proceedings began against TxDOT over the proposed I-45 expansion.

In January 2021, **Harris County** Judge Lina Hidalgo sent a letter to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requesting they intervene in the I-45 expansion. In March 2021, Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that TxDOT failed to follow National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) laws. In November 2021, Harris County paused their lawsuit to negotiate with TxDOT behind closed doors for changes to the development process and design. This pause lasted until December 2022, when both **City of Houston** and Harris County announced Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with TxDOT - they had reached agreements - and the lawsuit was dropped.

In 2021, Air Alliance Houston, LINK Houston, Stop TxDOT I-45, Texas Housers, Texas Appleseed, and several impacted individuals filed complaints with the **federal government** claiming that the I-45 expansion violates Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In March of 2021, the **FHWA** asked TxDOT to pause soliciting contracts while they investigated the design and development of the I-45 expansion to determine if the project was disproportionately affecting Black and Hispanic communities against federal law. This pause lasted two years until February 2023, when the FHWA announced a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) with TxDOT - they had reached a compromise - and the investigation was complete.

All three of these agreements have promised incremental changes to the project, but fail to address the underlying issues that drove both complaints: the project is harmful to residents, the expansion will not improve traffic, and TxDOT refuses to accept feedback or meaningfully engage with the communities who have been harmed by decades of freeway construction. The VRA, however, includes increased enforcement mechanisms from both the federal government and local agencies and individuals - we can be watchdogs on this project to ensure TxDOT meets the requirements they've been given.

Houston deserves a project that prioritizes safety, centers the lived experience of those most impacted by the project, actually relieves traffic, and moves us toward a more equitable future. There is still time, and **we will not stop fighting for our city and our lives.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET INVOLVED:

- Share this zine with a friend or relative
- Sign up for the Stop TxDOT I-45 email newsletter at www.stoptxdoti45.com for regular updates on the project and our work
- Follow @stoptxdoti45 on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook for news, events, and action alerts
- Attend a general meeting - every other Tuesday at 6 pm on Zoom. Find the Google Calendar of meetings on our website!
- Bring Stop TxDOT I-45 to your school, church, or group meeting to present on the project, timeline, ongoing advocacy, and ways to get involved
- Donate to Stop TxDOT I-45 and our friends in this fight
- Doorknock with us! Dates and signups will be posted on social media, our Google Calendar, and the newsletter

We Can Stop a Freeway!

In the 60s and 70s, residents organized and mobilized against the Harrisburg Freeway in Houston. They fought and won.

The story of the successful fight against the Harrisburg Freeway can be viewed as an inspirational roadmap for fighting freeway expansions in Houston today.

We can learn from them today. A better world and a better Houston is possible.

In 1961, TxDOT and City of Houston planners proposed a massive freeway project: the Harrisburg Freeway. This planned freeway sliced through some of the city's oldest neighborhoods, displaced thousands of residents, and destroyed homes, businesses, and historic sites. The planned Harrisburg Freeway would have begun at the end of Highway 225 at the 610 loop and cut through Magnolia Park, Harrisburg, and Second Ward into downtown.



Washington, D.C., 1965 protest

Source: *Houston Freeways*, Eric Slotboom

East End residents knew the Harrisburg Freeway would destroy their communities: they had already witnessed the effects that construction of I10 and HWY59 had on Fifth Ward. David Theis writes in the *Texas Observer*, “before being cut off from the city by the two highways, the Fifth Ward was a thriving working-class neighborhood.”

Building on local and national movements for social justice and civil rights in the 1950s and 60s, African American and Hispanic communities rightfully saw the planned freeway as yet another example of the city's disregard for their interests and well-being..

A coalition of commu-

FREEWAYS VS THE PEOPLE

YOU ARE INVITED TO AN OPEN-PUBLIC MEETING DESIGNED TO ALLOW YOU TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINIONS DIRECTLY TO YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ON CONSTRUCTION OF:

STATE HIGHWAY · 225
STATE HIGHWAY · 35
GULF FREEWAY EXPANSION

ALSO TO BE DISCUSSED
MASS TRANSIT FOR HOUSTON

WHERE: AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL, 1700 DUMBLE
7:00 PM. SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 1973
PRESENTED BY

ANTI-FREEWAY COALITION

Public meeting poster, 1973

Source: *Houston Freeways*, Eric Slotboom

nity members, activists, and journalists formed groups including the Anti-Freeway Coalition and the La Porte Freeway Extension Information Committee, which later became the East End Preservation and Development Association. **Community member Richard Holgin and journalist Maggie Landron, writing for Papel Chicano, were two of many bold individuals who organized to stop the Harrisburg Freeway.**

So, what did they do?

- Groups and individuals held multi-lingual political education sessions and community discussions across the city
- Groups organized affected residents to comment at public hearings and protests
- When the federal government issued new regulations requiring transportation projects to consider their impact on the environment and local communities in 1972, they challenged the project in court arguing that it would violate the new federal regulations and harm the health, safety, and welfare of nearby residents.

Community journalist Maggie Landron, writing in Papel Chicano in 1970, argued that “freeways are out of date before they are finished” and that the city should invest in mass transit to provide transportation “for residents within the city ... for fifty and seventy-five years from now, not just tomorrow.”

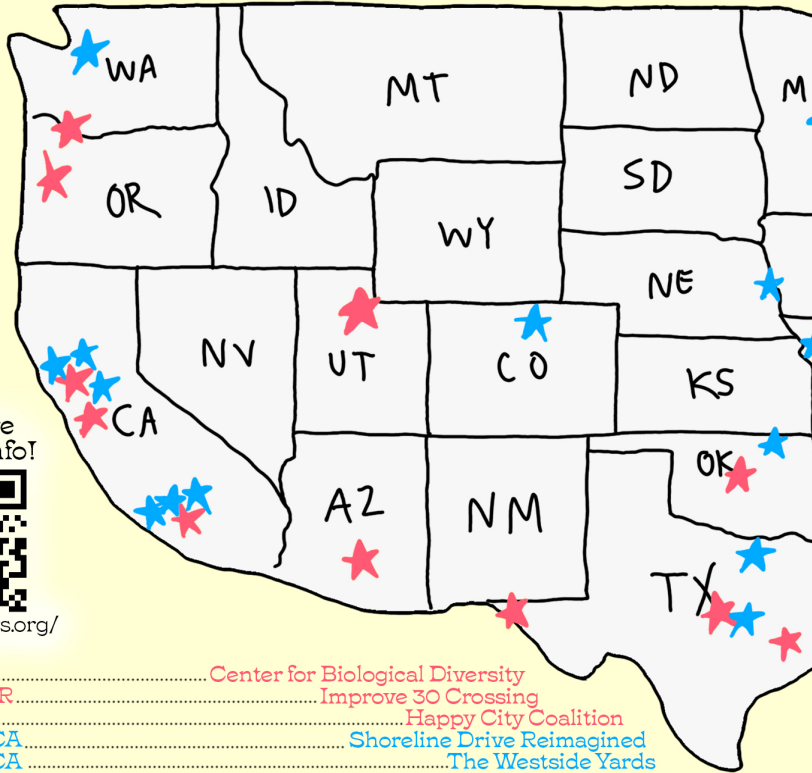
And it worked! The Harrisburg Coalition's efforts paid off in 1976 when TxDOT agreed to cancel the Harrisburg Freeway project. TxDOT cited the high cost of acquiring land and relocating residents, opposition from the community, and the new federal regulations as reasons for the cancellation. The victory was a significant milestone that demonstrated the power to challenge and change established systems through **grassroots organizing**. The victory also highlighted the need for more transparent and democratic decision-making processes that consider the needs and aspirations of all residents, regardless of their race, class, gender, ability, or political power.

Sources:
Houston Chronicle, Aug. 26, 2021
Power Moves, 2017
Houston Freeways, 2003

Think about something you are skilled at. How much could you achieve if there were 100 of you doing it together?



The end of 225, never expanded into the Harrisburg Fwy
Source: *Houston Freeways, Eric Slotboom*



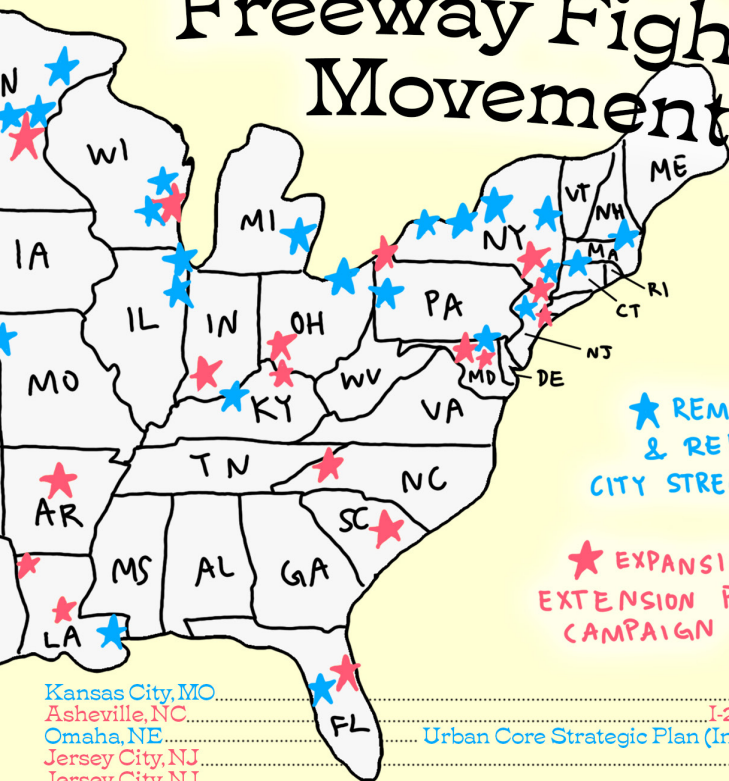
scan here
for more info!



freeway-fighters.org/

Tuscan, AZ	Center for Biological Diversity
Little Rock, AR	Improve 30 Crossing
Downey, CA	Happy City Coalition
Long Beach, CA	Shoreline Drive Reimagined
Long Beach, CA	The Westside Yards
Oakland, CA	ConnectOAKLAND
Pasadena, CA	Connecting Pasadena Project
San Francisco, CA	The Great Highway Park Initiative
San Francisco, CA	Neighbors for Tearing Down the I-280 Spur
San Francisco, CA	Sustainable South City
Santa Cruz, CA	Campaign for Sustainable Transportation
Denver, CO	Unite North MetroDenver
Hartford, CT	Hartford 400
Poinciana, FL	SCAR of Poinciana, FL
Tampa, FL	#blydtampa
Southern IN	Coalition Against the Mid-States Corridor
Chicago, IL	Imagine Lake Shore
Chicago, IL	Lakefront For All Chicago
Covington, KY	Expand Transit, Not Highways
Louisville, KY	8664
Lafayette, LA	Y-49
New Orleans, LA	Claiborne Avenue Alliance
Shreveport, LA	Allendale Strong
Somerville, MA	Grounding McGrath
Baltimore, MD	Harlem Park Neighborhood Plan
Rockville, MD	Don't Widen 270
Silver Spring, MD	Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
Detroit, MI	I-375 Improvement Project
Brooklyn Center, MN	Highway 252 Safety Task Force
Duluth, MN	Duluth Waterfront Collective
Minneapolis, MN	Bring Back 6th!
Minneapolis, MN	Twin Cities Boulevard

Freeway Fighting Movements



★ REMOVE HIGHWAY
& REPLACE WITH
CITY STREETS OR BLOCKS

★ EXPANSION OR
EXTENSION PREVENTION
CAMPAIGN

Kansas City, MO	Loop Reimagination
Asheville, NC	I-26 ConnectUS Project
Omaha, NE	Urban Core Strategic Plan (Interstate 480 removal)
Jersey City, NJ	Empower NJ
Jersey City, NJ	Turnpike Trap
Trenton, NJ	Trenton 250
Albany, NY	Albany Riverfront Collaborative
Bloomington, NY	Campaign against Route 17 Widening
Buffalo, NY	Scajaquada Corridor Coalition
New York, NY	Institute for Public Architecture; To BE or Not to BQE
Syracuse, NY	The Community Grid
Rochester, NY	Hinge Neighbors, Inc.
Akron, OH	Innerbelt Advisory Committee
Cincinnati, OH	Bridge Forward Cincinnati
Norman, OK	Pike Off OTA
Tulsa, OK	Transform Tulsa Alliance
Eugene, OR	Campaign against Highway 126 West Expansion
Portland, OR	No More Freeways
Charleston, SC	Coastal Conservation League
Erie, PA	Connect Urban Erie
Pittsburgh, PA	Ohio River Boulevarding & Project 19/65
Austin, TX	Livable Oak Hill
Austin, TX	ReThink35
Dallas, TX	Coalition for a New Dallas
El Paso, TX	Freeways for the People
Houston, TX	Stop TxDOT I-45
Provo, UT	People for a Better Provo
Seattle, WA	Cultivate South Park
Milwaukee, WI	Fix at Six (Interstate 94)
Milwaukee, WI	Fix at Six (Stadium Freeway)
Milwaukee, WI	Rethink 794

CROSSWORD QUIZ!

Rejog your memory!

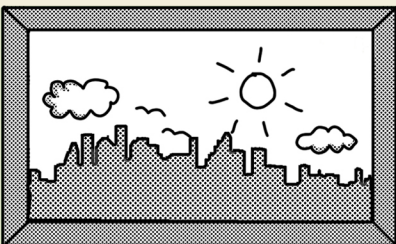
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20

WORD BANK

Activism	Austin	Canvassing	
Commission	Community	Dependency	
Displacement	Engagement	Equity	Galveston
Houston	InducedDemand	Investigation	
Opposition	Pollution	PublicTransit	StopTxDOTi45
Sustainability	Transportation	WhiteOakBayou	

ACROSS

2. One of the organizations trying to stop the highway expansion.
6. Defined as a group of people living in the same place or having a common characteristic, and as a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of shared attitudes, interests, and goals.
9. The capital city of Texas.
10. The Houston-_____ Area Council is a regional organization through which local governments consider issues and cooperate in solving area wide problems. Houston is underrepresented in this.
11. One of the biggest arguments against highway expansion. More lanes only lead to more traffic.
13. The I-45 expansion faces widespread _____; many people do not want it.
15. Where the I-45 expansion is planned to take place.
16. Preserving this space as a city park will help stop the expansion.
19. TxDOT stands for "Texas Department of _____"
20. TxDOT is governed by the Texas Transportation _____, a group of 5 people appointed by the Governor of Texas.



DOWN

1. Fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations, while ensuring a balance between environmental care, social wellbeing, and economic growth.
3. Involvement from the community.
4. Buses, trains, and high-speed rails are all _____.
5. Car-_____ is the idea that some city layouts cause cars to be favored over alternate forms of transportation, like bikes, walking, and public transit.
7. Systemic initiation of direct contact with individuals. StopTxDOTi45 does this in neighborhoods affected by the proposed expansion.
8. The I-45 expansion was on hold for two years because of a federal _____ for civil rights violations.
12. Highway expansion causes significant _____, forcing people to lose their homes, businesses, and places of worship.
14. Highway expansion will cause an increase of noise, light, water, and air _____.
17. One of Stop TxDOT I-45's key values. We advocate for policies that work for everyone.
18. _____ is the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.

