

30 Crossing Public Hearing

Public Comment on Proposed Amendment to *Imagine Central Arkansas*

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

ANTHONY NEWKIRK, North Little Rock, 72116

It appears to me that Metroplan is more or less the middle man between the interests of the public and the Highway Department. And that's a very good, a very beneficial role to have. I just have a couple of questions. I've only been able to attend one public meeting before, but the graphic material that's at these meetings, like the material at the back of the room tonight, seems to imply that this is going to happen, no matter what. And it seems to imply - for instance, the graphic material at the back wall - that traffic will have to increase. I'm wondering if that's really in the interests of our community. It's not economically sustainable, and it's really a waste of money. A half-a-billion dollars will be spent on this project and there's no consideration of a light rail system at all. I'm just wondering if any studies have been made on who uses the highway system. I don't mean numbers of people, I mean *who* uses the highway system. It isn't in the interest of the people of Arkansas to have to use the highway system. I'm wondering, wouldn't it be better to become dependent on light rail to get to work. We all know how human beings are, we get used to our environments. I'm just wondering who actually benefits from the 30 Crossing project. . . .I'll leave it at that.

PATRICIA BLICK, Quapaw Quarter Association, 72202

I'm Patricia Blick with the Quapaw Quarter Association. I'm the Executive Director. The mission of the Quapaw Quarter Association is preserving greater Little Rock's historic places. I just have a brief statement I'd like to share with you. As this undertaking evolves, we will continue to advocate to avoid and minimize adverse effects on historic properties, in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. "Historic properties" includes significant individual properties, historic districts, and archaeological sites. At this point we do not know if there will be direct or indirect impacts to historic properties. We do request an assessment of all the impacts to historic properties, because in the end, we may save the buildings but if the environment is so heavily compromised and the quality of life has eroded, people will not want to live or work there. We ask that the decision-makers keep this in mind as they move ahead with this project. Right now, the board of the QQA has not taken a position on whether or not to support the amendment before you. If we do, if the board does make a decision, we will share that with you before the deadline of May 30. Thank you.

PATRICK STAIR, North Little Rock, 72114

Thank you. My name is Patrick Stair and I live in downtown North Little Rock. For purposes of disclosure, I am a member of the RPAC; however, I am speaking as a resident of downtown North Little Rock, where I've lived almost 20 years. And prior to that, I was a resident of downtown Little Rock for almost 20 years. So you might say I'm a long-time downtowner. I'm pleased to see you board members here and I'm very disappointed that the mayors of Little Rock and North Little Rock, the most affected communities, were not able to make it, because in a way I'm addressing them particularly, as a resident of the downtown area. There are so many problems and so little time. First, I disagree with the phrase "capacity improvements" Whether the Highway Department's design will give improvement is still hotly debated. In fact, according to analyses by the Metroplan staff the 30 Crossing project as currently planned would not be sufficient without three major additional widenings elsewhere in order to "avoid forming bottlenecks , which will impact traffic operations and safeties within the 30 Crossing corridor."

So, in addition to the \$630 million price tag for the original project, we will also be setting ourselves up for three or more additional major projects, the costs of which have neither been estimated nor shown. In fact, we still don't know how much the Highway Department designs are costing us over the base cost of replacing the bridge and repaving the deteriorating corridor, because the Highway Department has never provided us with that cost estimate. So we don't know whether we are paying one dollar or 600 million dollars more, than simply repairing the corridor. We have to replace the bridge, so that should be our base cost. Yet can anyone in this room tell us the base cost for this bridge replacement? One frightening thing for me as a resident is the financial burden this project has a high probability of imposing. The Highway Department is going to push through this major expansion, but who gets to pay for all the reworking of intersections, the changing of local streets in neighborhoods, that will be required? The Highway Department has made it very clear that those are not its responsibility. For instance, everyone thought a park under the freeway in Little Rock looked mighty pretty in the presentation at the Wyndham last year. But the Highway Department quickly made it clear that they wouldn't be the ones paying for it. At a time when North Little Rock is asking for a tax increase to pay the basic bills, and when Little Rock is trying to get more money for the schools, it is surprising to me that these two cities appear to be quite willing to take on unspecified, long-term and fairly open-ended obligations imposed by the Highway Department plan. I strongly urge the Metroplan Board to reject the entire amendment to the plan until the Highway Department clarifies the cost, the base cost; determines the cost for all the downstream effects; and evaluates alternate plans, such as Metroplan's hybrid - and very sensible looking - eight lane option. If you must amend it, I recommend reverting to the RPAC's original suggestion, plus the inclusion of the illustrative projects. In conclusion, I dream of a boulevard! Thank you.

JOHN BAKER, Little Rock, 72202

Good evening. My name is John Baker. I live at 1011 Scott Street in Little Rock. I am opposed to this amendment in all of its forms. This is an example of dumb planning, not smart planning. Thank you.

HASKELL DICKINSON, Little Rock, 72207

Good evening, and I thank you for letting the public make some comments this evening. I am Haskell Dickinson, president and CEO of McGeorge Contracting Company, and we build highways and other structures. I'm not really here as a favor to anybody at the Highway Department, but it's because I believe a good case can be made for this road, especially for the working man, hourly people that supply goods and services to this community from all over the region. We are all aware, I think, that the latest design, which I support, has been the result of almost two years or more of public comment/collaboration, and I'm proud of the result, although I think as somebody mentioned, there may be some other changes. This is minimally invasive, both historically and environmentally, and it will be much safer, especially to the local traffic, and it will allow the goods and services that you've been depending on for all these years to continue 24/7. Further, it allows people from all over the region to access our cities with enormous value that it brings. But I'd like you to take just a moment to imagine what Little Rock and the region would be without the interstate to connect us together. Would the UAMS be here? Would it be located here, or would Children's be here, or would the big airport be here in Little Rock? Would the air force base be in Jacksonville if we didn't have the interstate to connect us together for all these years? Would there be emergency services, be as easy to accommodate us now? There's just all kinds of things that would happen to us if we had not been the beneficiary of the interstate system. Well, if we didn't have it, for sure the traffic wouldn't be as bad and there probably wouldn't be a need for you all to be up here tonight as Metroplan, probably wouldn't be enough people here. Without the interstate, the question is, would we be just another struggling delta town? You know, I wonder if Metroplan has already made a big mistake some years ago by not supporting

Governor Bill Clinton's North Belt in 1991. Talk about costing us some money, I put that right up there with losing Federal Express. Right now, the new belt, the North Belt is 30 miles north of here and it will take all of, will take a tremendous amount of growth in north central Arkansas that we would have gotten around Little Rock and North Little Rock. There was a very interesting headline out of Great Britain two weeks ago. I think this is interesting for everybody, if you haven't seen it. One of the great public utilities in Great Britain, National Grid, said that for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, no power was generated in Great Britain by coal. Isn't that something? So that's very important. But is that important to us? Well, the reason it's important to us is very simple. Even though we are going to change to better energy sources, regardless of the government, we are still going to have all these people, still going to have growth in the area, and it needs the added capacity of a bigger interstate system. Thank you very much.

KATHY WELLS, Little Rock, 72206

Good evening. I'm Kathy Wells. I'm president of the Coalition of Little Rock Neighborhoods. I live in downtown, which means both I-30 and 630 are near and dear to my heart and my house, so I want them in good shape. The Coalition of Little Rock Neighborhoods asks you to slow down, and get all the details before you decide what I-30 proposal to support. As the elected officials from this five-county area, you have the duty to be prudent with public funds. This record shows there's not enough money for this I-30 expansion and existing plans for arterials and other upgrades, so you must tell citizens what you will give away to gain this state expansion of I-30. The state does acknowledge this proposal would push congestion onto I-630 and other junctions in future years, but no funding is provided to pay for any future lane-widening elsewhere. You must decide whether to gamble money will come from "somewhere" to fix predicted choke points. You still have not seen the state justifications for what you are supposed to fund; those come next fall. This mammoth job dwarfs any before it, which demands extra care from you in providing approvals. Don't buy a pig in a poke, as the saying goes. Defer this action until you get all needed information. Press federal officials to provide an Environmental Impact Statement and sample the air at Rockefeller School, not just across the region. Get a review of East End neighborhood threats to homes and families, who are owed protection under Environmental Justice rules; get, finally, realistic alternative solutions to the congestion problems this expansion aims to solve. To date, officials say, we have the fourth highest freeway miles per capita in the nation. Let's look at alternatives, like another bridge; like mass transit and rapid-transit lanes; rein back on another lane of highway and another cement contract. Wait for the Environmental Impact Statement, nor just the Environmental Assessment this fall. Giving in to state threats of no more future roads ends the same place as approving a project that dumps more traffic problems on us in future, with no money for any roads - except with worse congestion. Rely on your professional staff. Note they have not seen state models in detail either, but they have sufficient detail to propose a fix to slowdowns remaining in the state proposal - that's the "hybrid" proposal. If only you could get the state to agree. You're staking your reputation on these decisions. Demand all the facts before you decide what proposal to support. Thank you.

JEFF HATHAWAY, Little Rock, 72207

Good evening. I'm Jeff Hathaway. I've lived in this community for 53 years; I'm a Little Rock resident. I own a small, local business. I'm a member of Metroplan's Regional Planning Advisory Council, and I'm the Immediate Past Chairman of the Little Rock Regional Chamber. I'm here to speak in favor of the proposed amendment to Metroplan's long-range transportation plan. I believe that capacity improvements up to and including major widening are appropriate for the 30 Crossing corridor and I would like to see the 30 Crossing project move forward in the approved process. I understand that can only happen if the long-range plan is consistent with the alternatives that have been recommended for

the project, and so I support the amendment which will achieve that consistency. I've participated in this process as an interested citizen from the very beginning. I voted for the Connecting Arkansas Program sales tax, for which this project was identified. I watched the CAP team gather extensive public input and respond to it. The bridge needs to be replaced, and it makes all the sense in the world to simultaneously address the corridor's legitimate issues of mobility, safety, connectivity, and community, and I believe the process eventually resulted in four alternative designs that make good sense and accomplish those objectives. Metroplan was totally on target when it recently published a fact sheet that said this corridor is unique because it "is the backbone of the central Arkansas freeway network, connecting six freeways in a little over six miles" and that "the corridor also includes key interchanges for access to the downtowns of Little Rock and North Little Rock." With such an important corridor, it would be a shame to end up in a no-build scenario, or to just replace the bridge and leave the other issues alone, or to choose an alternative that chokes off access to our downtowns. One of the reasons I support the plan amendment is that I agree with the Little Rock Regional Chamber's early endorsement of the "six through-lanes plus four CD lanes with split diamond interchange" alternative. That particular plan improves pedestrian connectivity by removing the elevated on/off ramp at 2nd Street, removing the cloverleaf exist ramp system, and removing berms and barriers to allow clear views and access between east and west. It also allows Little Rock to reclaim almost 17 acres of green space, and results in a net decrease of concrete surfaces in the River Market area. The plan also enhances pedestrian safety as it accommodates safer sidewalks and bike lanes. It improves traffic flow in and out of the downtown areas by improving at-grade frontage road and separating through traffic from local traffic. It enhances safety, also, with the separation of the through traffic, and provides much-needed shoulders on the bridge itself. Finally, it allows reasonable access to and from the workplace for thousands of commuters, which in turn encourages employers to stay in the downtown areas and be a part of all the great things happening there. The plan amendment now on the table does not endorse any specific design alternative. But it allows the process to advance and an alternative - with whatever tweaks or changes or enhancements come about through the process - to eventually be approved, and I think that is what our citizens voted for and what is in the best interests of the community. I encourage the Metroplan Board to approve the plan amendment.

BARRY HAAS, Little Rock, 72223

Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to speak, and I'm glad that at least some of the Metroplan board members are here, and that my good mayor has joined us, lately. Interstates were originally envisioned to go around cities, not pierce their hearts. The proposed I-30 widening continues the mistake made 50 years ago and saddles us with a worse future. It would impact downtown Little Rock and North Little Rock for the next 50 or 60 years. If Metroplan and the Highway Department get this wrong, all of us, but especially those who live and work downtown will pay a very steep price, and not just in wasted tax dollars. The public has not been offered a reasonable alternative. We were given "no build," which meant that nothing, absolutely nothing would happen, including replacing the bridge, which the federal government has mandated. None of those built options offer practical alternatives. A practical alternative would be replacement of the I-30 bridge, improving the access ramps to get on and off the interstate, improving the signage to divert traffic that now goes through downtown Little Rock, to alternate pathways. So we don't know the cost of a reasonable alternative. A year ago, a traffic study showed that this project would in effect back up traffic on all the arterials in downtown Little Rock all the way west to Broadway Street, for those who are familiar with downtown Little Rock. The study area that the Highway Department did is so narrow that it did not consider all those costs. The Highway Department tells us they can't spend money on arterials. We know that's not true, because they are doing that in other parts of the state on projects. The voters passed a ten-year half-cent sales tax - 1.8 billion dollars generated over ten years. This project would take \$404 million dollars of that, 25 percent

of the entire state's money, on this one 6.9 mile stretch. What about the constituents in Ward, Haskell, Greenbrier, Faulkner County, Saline County? All of you who are on this board, what about your constituents, who are getting nothing for their tax dollars? Finally, a judge tells jurors that they're allowed to bring their common sense into the jury room. You have to consider the evidence that's presented, but you are - the judge tells you, "bring your common sense in with you." As Metroplan board members, you too, are allowed to use your common sense. You already know it will move congestion to different sections of adjacent interstates. You know it will lead to ever more widening of additional instates sections, costing potentially billions of dollars according to your own studies. And you know there's already a shortage of funding to maintain the roads we already have. I ask that you reject the proposed amendment to *Imagine Central Arkansas*, your long range planning document. Tell the Highway Department you a rework of the alternatives to include a reasonable alternative that should include consideration of the boulevard idea developed by local architect Tom Fennell, an option that would allow downtown Little Rock to shine and offer development opportunities that would increase the tax base and improve quality of life. Thank you.

TOM FENNELL, Little Rock, 72206

My name is Tom Fennell. I'm a local architect. I've spent many, many, many hours on this problem. I appreciate you all having this meeting and to take our input. I've studied this problem from many, many different directions, and recently I've come to realize the big mistake was putting the freeway there in the first place, and the second big mistake was that the Highway Department refused to follow NEPA guidelines. They were charged by the Federal Highway Administration to present reasonable alternatives that you, as the Metroplan Board, could consider. The Metropolitan Planning Organization was mandated by the Federal Highway Administration to buffer us citizens from the Highway Department, across the country. This is not happening. We have four, almost identical approaches to freeway, massive freeway widening. I doubted their statistics, when they projected from 2040, their traffic numbers. So we hired our own consultant, who said a boulevard with an additional river crossing performs as well or better than a freeway expansion. Now think about this. A boulevard raises the value of everything it touches. All the streets that cross a major boulevard are the most valuable pieces of property in town. Look at Markham and University; look at Cantrell and University; look at any of our major intersections of arterials in town. Arterials are meat and potatoes for city governments' tax base and for commerce. Regardless of what the Chamber of Commerce fellow said earlier, the interstate will only depress economic activity in Little Rock. It will shift this economic activity outside of our area. And here's another important factor to remember. Houston is the most, one of the most freeway-intensive cities in the country. The mayor came out last week and said that "we're done; no more widenings." He said, we have the [decaying] freeway at 26 lanes, and it's more congested than it ever was." If we widen I-30 through downtown, we're going to have to widen 630. As Patrick and Barry both said, we're going to have to widen all of these other freeways. You can't build your way out congestion. And yet, we have this opportunity to create a wonderful [region] in central Arkansas that is a national model for how you build cities, and rebuild cities. We have the opportunity for a vibrant, attractive, competitive small city. And yet, we're going to throw it away on freeways. We going to spend all this money, and we're going to spend more money, and more money, and more money, trying to solve a problem that doesn't increase our economic base. It did in the 60s, it did in the 70s. Every interchange that had no development, it developed. Well, those are done. We can't build new - with the North Belt, would've created economic activity - we can't depend on these statements anymore. We're going to commission a financial study to show just this. If you look at an acre of developed property, in a suburban area, the tax base per acre is much, much less than an urban dense - a dense urban acre, produces ten times the tax in revenue and economic activity, as a suburban acre. Thank you.

ROBERT WALKER, Little Rock, 72205

Thank you, sir. My name is Robert Walker. I live in Little Rock. The Highway Department works on getting us good highways at a low cost. They don't look at anything else. When you lay new lanes of traffic, you've got impervious surfaces, you're going to have more runoff, you're going to have more flooding. There's flooding already in Dark Hollow. In my neighborhood, residents' homes were flooded. This plan is going to put more lanes out there; there'll be more flooding. There's going to be increased atmospheric temperatures; that means we're going to have more cloudbursts - and they're going to have to rewrite the floodplains, eventually. Our mayor recently helped dedicate the start of construction of new clinics at Children's Hospital. Heavy urban traffic induces asthma. [The] asthma clinic is going to be one of the big users in this space you helped to dedicate. You're embarking on this. Every one of you has schools in your area, and I hope you support reduced speed limits at those schools, because children might wander off in the street and get harmed. It is certain that heavy urban traffic will induce asthma. To endorse this is inexcusable and unforgivable, to cost even one child to get sick because you want to drive fast in their neighborhoods. A good neighborhood has good neighbors in it. Somebody dies, moves out, somebody else wants to move in, and they're a good neighbor. A slum is a place where people don't want to live, but they have to. You induce slums when you put in urban interstates. Right along adjacent to all the urban interstates where it's noisy interstates - people don't want to live there. But people do. And they live there, and I don't know, things go downhill. The Highway Department was mandated by the federal government to consider noise when they embarked on new projects. So they wrote their standard. They go out there and measure that noise at the last instant and say, that's the noise level here. You know, we're going to put in more lanes and it's this noisy? We're going to consider that maybe it's convenient to us, we'll try to keep the noise level down. That is totally wrong. We know what the noise level was before they put in the freeway; they should reduce the noise. We should have good neighborhoods. It will cost them more and they don't want to do that. We should have good neighborhoods, and we should not give illness to children because we want to drive fast. The future is uncertain. Before freeways came about, there was no Uber, there was no ridesharing. Now you get cars with Wifi, the next thing you know they're going to say, "ok, all cars have to maintain a minimum distance" - and we are really going to be able to increase the density on the lanes we've got. Really think about this. Thank you.

DAVID PETERSON, Little Rock, 72206

My name is David Peterson. My first - I'm just going to start with a question: Do you consider yourself a person that either likes to build wealth, to enjoy a good quality of life? I am concerned about the quality of life for those of us in Little Rock, as well as building wealth. There's a few facts about this project. The first is that this project was initiated because there is a pier in the shipping lane. The second fact is that this project will cost at least \$600 million to rebuild the bridge and the surrounding seven miles of interstate. Third, the design life of the bridge and the interstate around it are probably going to be 50 or 60 years and it is going to be much wider than the current interstate that is there. One of my concerns is that the bridge is currently structurally sound and this is really a project that is being forced on the State of Arkansas by the federal government. Six hundred million dollars is a lot of money and if the State of Arkansas is going to be spending \$600 million - we have the \$600 million from the tax - this money should be used in a way to build wealth, or capital, for the State of Arkansas. This project will not build any wealth or capital for the State of Arkansas. It is going to be replacing a road and a bridge that already exists. The design life of the bridge means that this cost will reoccur in 50 or 60 years. And I have another concern, that people, yes, are going to be traveling faster, as stated by other people, and it's going to make more road noise, and it's going to lower the quality of life for anyone who is in Little Rock. So I have four questions that go along with my four points. How many barges are running into the bridge pier that are causing enough damage to the barges to justify even the expense of just even replacing the

bridge, let alone building the \$600 million interstate? How much will it cost to replace this system in 50 or 60 years? Is that being figured into the long, long-term plan? Are we building it in such a way that it will be cheap to rebuild? And will this project generate enough wealth to pay for its replacement, and do the residents or visitors of Little Rock want to accept the increase in road noise? Thank you for your time.

JOHNNY BURGESS, Little Rock, 72201

Good evening. My name is Johnny Burgess [personal address] in Little Rock, and I'm here tonight to ask the Board to approve the amendment to include the 30 Crossing in the long-range plan. As a business owner in downtown Little Rock, I'm someone who while not a resident of downtown Little Rock, I spend probably more than 50 percent of my waking hours downtown. Downtown is a very special place. Also as the owner of a business, 75 percent of my workforce - I mean, I represent a regional workforce - 75 percent of my workers come to work every day from outside the city limits. So the connectivity allowing people to transit from outside the county and outside the city to downtown is very important to me, and very important to the growth and stability of my business. Secondly, while I and my workers on the job, we enjoy the quality of place that exists downtown. We enjoy walking around, we enjoy going to the attractions that are downtown and the many amenities that we work for to improve. And I've lived in Little Rock for 40 years. The interstate as exists today, I've heard some complaints about this project as increasing the separation of the east and west sides of Little Rock and North Little Rock. The fact is, the separation exists today. And from what I've seen, the plans as proposed or the options that are being considered, greatly improve that status. I believe that the connectivity, not just of people being able to transit into the region, across the region, to work and to live but also to get around while they are downtown is greatly enhanced by the project, and I think the project itself and the improvements that we will see in the quality of life and quality of place in downtown are very much worth the effort of what we are going through to get this project done. I appreciate your consideration.

PAUL DODDS, Little Rock, 72202

My name is Paul Dodds. I live in the Central High area of Little Rock. I would like to repeat the objections that a number of people have to this amendment. This is not an improvement. We can call it the worse improvement; I think the language clearly states the bias. I'd just like to raise two concerns, I think both property rights and civil rights concerns about this expansion. I've invested heavily in the Central High neighborhood area, which was basically had a great deal of abandonment, which was reinforced, much of it created, by the building of route 630. Highways like this can kill neighborhoods, it's proven. The east side of the highway, Hangar Hill, I think will be destroyed by this. It has a large impact on property values in areas. You could create a lot of value, instead, this will decrease value. The civil rights aspect is the decreased values tend to fall disproportionately on minorities. It certainly does in my neighborhood. So I would just urge you, and I'd especially urge the mayor of the City of Little Rock, to take strong decision against this, to not take an action until there is a full Environmental Impact Statement, not just an Environmental Assessment. It needs more review, it needs careful review, and it needs review of the options - including the boulevard option - and not just roads that make it easier to flee the city. Thank you very much.

ALEX MORGAN, Little Rock, 72212

Good evening to you. I for one am opposed to this amendment, because for one, all it does is just take a lot more money that [unintelligible] and two, it affects not just downtown but the State as a whole. [Unintelligible]. And I've been doing a lot of research on this and can tell it's going to do a lot more harm than good. Even though I am for improvements to this interstate, I'm against the amount of lanes that's been proposed. All it's going to do is it's going to increase traffic and not relieve congestion, and your

studies have proven that. And they show that for the Big Rock Interchange and all the other "improvements" as well. And also, I'll speak not just for downtown but for the whole State of Arkansas: I think it doesn't need to be built. It's just too much. If the Highway Department wants to look at, is big on road building, why not look at alternate routes? Or a new bridge, or something? That would help, like the North Belt loop around the city would've helped. Or getting alternate transportation, like bus rapid or light rail, like everybody else said? And I think that we should all be looking at that, and slowing down a bit before we start. So, please. I encourage you to use your common sense and start looking at viable alternatives. That's going to help [unintelligible] Your policy, you don't want to go past six lanes. I highly agree with that, and I think we ought to be looking more and more at details and hope that the next time we have a meeting the Highway Department can actually present those details to the public, so everybody can see why we can't get that. So, I urge you to vote against this. Thank you.

DALE PEKAR, Little Rock, 72202

I'd like to join with those voices who have called for you to oppose this addition. The thing you have to understand about congestion is that there's been a lot of congestion in the downtown area, and there's been a lot of development along with that congestion. Things basically have been going really good in the downtown areas of Little Rock and North Little Rock, along with that congestion. Congestion is a normal part of development. It's not something that you can build your way out of. I'm also concerned about the failure of the Highway Department to ahead and really generate an Environmental Impact Statement, and consider all the alternatives. Sometimes people will ask me, which is the better way to do it, and I have to admit I don't know because they have not prepared the documents that would give us a wide range of alternatives to consider. And until you see those alternatives, you don't know. Basically, what they did is they generated three different ten-lane alternatives. It's kind of like, a chocolate sundae, or a chocolate sundae with marshmallows, or a chocolate sundae with marshmallows and nuts. It's still a chocolate sundae. I mean, it's three ten-lane alternatives. And then they went to the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration says, hey, how about doing an eight-lane alternative. They said, ok - they did it. Well, how come they can't go ahead and build the boulevard alternative? How come they can't look at these other alternatives that the citizens have asked for? Why is it that they will not listen to the citizens? Since 2013, they've been working on this. They sent our correspondence internally and externally, saying they were going to add lanes. How come, for all these four years, they've not gone ahead and brought these other alternatives for citizens to consider? Instead, they looked at individual pieces of those things and said, "well, that individual piece by itself will not work. That individual piece by itself will not work." But they've not constructed coordinated alternatives that do not add lanes. I think we really should be looking toward the future. We should be considering autonomous cars, self-driving cars; we should be looking at putting covers over the interstates to reduce freezing rain and precipitation, to take care of the unusual events that slow down our traffic. Instead of just looking at capacity, we should be looking more at safety. These things are very important to us. So basically, what I ask you to do is to turn down this recommendation for expansion, and tell the Highway Department to go back and do an EIS and develop reasonable alternatives so that

JODI MORRIS, Little Rock, 72202

Thank you for being here and giving us this chance [to speak] and I hope you are listening. I've lived in Pulaski County eight years; I've worked here at Pulaski County for eight years. I regularly travel to northeast Arkansas and southwest to Hot Springs. I travel through this circuit on a regular basis. I tried living in North Little Rock a year and commuting across the bridge to south of 630, and I decided to move south of 630. And I love those historic neighborhoods, the richness and all the things they have to

offer, and I don't want to see them further destroyed. This amendment is proof that widening the I-30 bridge is a self-fulfilling prophecy of endless congestion and further widening of the interstate for decades and generations to come. And that's a lose-lose proposition. None of the modeling I see back here takes into account anything but current commuter use and population growth. It doesn't look at any of the lifestyle factors that will change, the fact that millennials are increasingly moving into urban areas, that our country is becoming more urban. Arkansas is proof of that, as is any other state. The traffic patterns are going to change. Our driving patterns are going to change. The demand for public transportation, mass transit and other options are going to be there - and we're not going to have the money because we wasted it on building for decades-ago lifestyles, instead of future lifestyles. This is backassward planning instead of forward thinking.

JOHN HEDRICK, Little Rock 72202

Thank you. I'd like to provide some food for thought regarding highway expansion. The interstate highway system was authorized in June 1956. Because of the car-centric suburban lifestyle, the first enclosed climate-controlled shopping mall was built in suburban Minneapolis-St. Paul in October of 1956. Thus began a symbiotic relationship: The interstate spurred the growth of the suburbs and enclosed shopping malls. By 2005, some 54,000 miles of interstate and some 1,500 malls were built. The last enclosed shopping mall was built about ten years ago. Now the malls are dying. Malls are being repurposed and replaced just as other cities are removing interstates that tear apart their hearts. According to the National Retail Federation's survey of Thanksgiving shoppers in 2016, 44 percent shopped online, while only 40 percent shopped in the store. We must recognize that things change. In the early 60s, A&P was the largest retailer in the United States. The first Walmart opened in 1962. By 2015, A&P - a skeleton of its former self, is liquidated, and Walmart is now the planet's largest retailer. But now Walmart is boosting its online presence and closing 269 stores. Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, was born in 1964, so Amazon was not even a gleam in his eye as interstates, malls and Walmart grew. Amazon is now the world's eighth largest retailer. As retail changes, so transportation changes. Ford Motor Company has rebranded itself as a "mobility company." Ford recognizes change and wants to be able to adapt. Uber, Lyft, other rideshare and carshare programs are relatively new. We are on the cusp of autonomous, self-driving vehicles being able to take us where we need to go. There are predictions that by the out-years of the 30 Crossing project planning period, the majority of vehicles will be autonomous and no longer owned by individuals; they'll be part of the shared economy. We made packages delivered by drones, products manufactured in our homes by 3-D printers. A&P died because it didn't adapt. Using the retailing analogy, AHTD wants not only to spend all our money but also to mortgage our future to build a mall, when malls throughout the country are dying. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Metroplan's policy Board is to decide what is best for the region. Please reject continuous freeway widening. Metroplan's *Imagine Central Arkansas* is a solid, well-vetted plan that keeps options open for a multi-modal transportation network. Please don't give the Highway Department a blank check. Let's keep local control and do what is best for our city and region.

FRANK KELLY, Little Rock, 72207

Thank you for giving the public an opportunity to speak today. I think that we can't keep doing things the way that we've always done them. We've got to think outside of the box, like Tom Fennel has done so expertly, and illustrated for us as a wonderful alternative. I've got a lot of activities I'm involved in. But, one idea that I've heard throughout this whole discussion to solve the issue, I think, in the most economical fashion, would be to simply replace the signage. And directing people that take, say, I-440 as a combination of I-30 with, as mentioned earlier, the smart cars, the GPS, autonomous driving. I'm so looking forward to myself someday getting in a car and just sitting back and letting it take me where I want to go. So these GPS units, these autonomous cars, they are going to follow the route that is

programmed in, and if I-30 is combined in with I-440 around the city, that's where the cars are going to go. So there's no reason we couldn't have a beautiful boulevard through the city. I'm part of a growing community of cyclists who are more than willing to give up our automobiles most of the time, and take our bicycles instead to get around the metropolitan area. But, there's very little bicycle infrastructure that currently exists in Little Rock, so the reason that you don't see a lot of that is because the infrastructure's not there. What I'm saying is build it and they will come, and I believe that is true with the cycling community too. The split diamond, if you ended up with something like this, has the 17 acre park that was mentioned earlier. To me that's a great attribute, but the noise pollution and air pollution going along with it, that is being cited, would not make that a desirable park. But, any greenspace is very much welcome. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak.

BRAD WALKER, Little Rock, 72207

I've enjoyed my opportunity to participate on RPAC. RPAC has repetitively voted and expressed its opinions, and that has not found strong reception on this Board. So I appreciate the opportunity to address you tonight, and those that I know personally, and the mayor that was kind enough to let me volunteer for RPAC. I've become convinced that we can enhance travel to and in our sister cities by maintaining those routes around, but not through those cities. I hope you will choose to balance the access of convenience with the value of the destination. The Imagine Central Arkansas plan that's been developed, that I have only discovered in the year and a half I've been on the RPAC, is the constraints that you're now feeling. So I would be against the amendment. I would be against letting those constraints off because that's where the balanced plan is developed. I'm supportive of an additional river bridge crossing and the vision of the Arkansas Boulevard. Tom has given us a great catalyst for a solution, but the best way for us to experience it is to have a corridor free Sunday. I hope this Board will join me in closing the interstate from Little Rock to North Little Rock for a Sunday. Let's have a day with no through traffic, and let's know what the test is. Let's know what the noise was. Let's know what it is to do no harm. We can't know unless we close it. I've talked to the highway department. I've made a request. They tell me there's no permit we have to get from them. I need only to ask North Little Rock and the City of Little Rock for a permit. I'd like you to join me in the request for a permit to close it one Sunday. If we close it for just one day, these two communities can experience our river without the burden of high-speed traffic. We can recapture the land, the vision, the economic experience, the bicycle experience, and we can have a reality to know what we've been asked to give up. Take tonight as the time to turn this community struggle, and demonstrate a willingness to change. The revival of I-30 as Arkansas Boulevard will begin the restoration of our communities, and maybe just the act of taking out the interstate will make us a great southern city with opportunities we can't envision. Thank you.

DANIEL BECK, Little Rock, 72207

Hi, my name is Daniel Beck. I live in Little Rock. I thank you for being here. I have to say, I really debated on whether to come tonight simply because I don't think the Board has been listening. Metroplan had a vision. When the highway department proposed the expansion they threw that vision into the ground. Several members of the community spoke out against it for several reasons. Mine, I think it's too expensive to have the expansion and the continued expansion that will be needed. RPAC overwhelmingly voted to keep the plan, and then the Metroplan Board, maybe with the exception of Jarod (Varner), said no we're going to change it. So I'm not sure that anything can be said tonight that will change anybody's mind on the panel. I hope there's leadership to change the way that we've done things in the past, and understand that there's a different way to do things, and we're going to go on the same expensive cycle unless we do change. I look forward to building whatever coalition that I can to put in place the leadership that has that vision. Thank you.

CHRIS EAST, Little Rock, 72202

Hello everyone. Thank you for having me and having this event this evening. My name is Chris East and I'm a resident and an employee in downtown Little Rock I'm here just to represent myself. I've been involved with the 30 Crossing project for quite some time through the Studio Main nonprofit organization. Now I don't really want to comment on the current design being considered. But I do want to say that I do believe we've come to a compromise solution and I've seen the progress that the Arkansas Transportation Department has made since the beginning. And I think we can continue that progress as long as we maintain that dialog with them. That being said, when the latest set of plans from AHTD came out we wrote a letter that one of the first things we asked for in that letter was a comprehensive downtown master plan, because we understand that value of master plans. We already have a comprehensive transportation plan in the Imagine Arkansas plan. Now, since that meeting a lot of information continues to come to light about transportation planning that is occurring, and one of the biggest ones being that traffic congestion will continue with the expansion of this system. To me that means we really need to think quite hard about the investment we will make because of that. So I just want to request that you all do maintain the 6 lane cap and that you do maintain the master planning that has been done by Metroplan. I do believe we can still keep that cap and come up with a good reasonable solution that AHTD will work with as they've already shown they can do. Thank you very much.

CARY TYSON, Little Rock, 72205

Thank you, members of the Board. I hope you'll read my letter I formally submitted last night. What I want to echo first of all – I'm against the lane expansion for many reasons, not the least of which, it's not a fiscally conservative or fiscally responsible approach. Staff and its recommendation have already said it won't address congestion. I think taking advice from professional staff is particularly important. Like a lot of people here tonight, I care about my city and state, though I can be concerned like others have said, the impact of this won't be what it should be. Every citizen has duty to be informed, thoughtfully concerned, and participate in the search for solutions. So that's why we're here tonight. Like I said in my letter, I explained Braess' Paradox, which is about induced demand and how this won't help with traffic. But the biggest thing I want to talk about today is how many of us in the room followed the Imagine Central Arkansas plan over many years. We were involved because we believed it was a pure process. It took years and about a million dollars. Amending this plan is really a hit to the public trust. I mean, it's very influential. Why should citizens be involved if everything we do is ignored? What ultimately things like this do is make lesser citizens. We've seen that on a national level in recent months. And frankly, we saw it in my city I think with the recent elections in Little Rock. It's disappointing, but it's understandable. So I urge you to consider that involvement, and that professional advice. Finally, I want you to take the fiscally responsible point and take the advice of your professional staff. Because we want to be involved citizens and it takes that public trust to do that. Thank you.

JAY CHESSHIR, Little Rock 72201

My comments may actually be quicker than me getting here. I apologize. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak tonight. I want to tell you that I'm Jay Chesshir, I'm with the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce and I'm here to speak in favor of the plan amendment to the long-range plan. Having been a part of many of the planning processes for the previous plans I recognize that a plan is just that – something that we take a look at, hopefully we all have input in and then we come up with what we think are the best solutions given that moment in time. If you go back to 2011, we began to look at the issue with the bridge. We also recognized at that time that this was not a Little Rock/North Little Rock issue, that this was a regional mobility issue. I've heard a lot about quality of place, quality of life tonight. And so as we in 2011 began looking at those specific issues we realized to have a vibrant

regional economy, we had to have regional mobility, both from the standpoint of public transportation, as well as from the standpoint of through-traffic and traffic coming in and out of the core of the region, that being Little Rock and North Little Rock. I haven't looked at these numbers in a few years, but a few years ago, over 100,000 people woke up in another county other than Pulaski and drove here to work. As you might imagine, the majority of that traffic that we're talking about through the 30 corridor, actually stops within the corridor and so the idea of better signage solving our problem...you know we have the blessing of looking at that bridge every day from our building and for those who would take the time to do that you will notice the absence of a lot of things. But the biggest thing you'll notice the absence of big trucks. They already recognize that's a bottleneck, and they're already taking alternate routes because they realize that if they get into an accident in that corridor, they're there for hours not minutes. So, as we began that process of trying to figure out not only what to do with the bridge but also what to do with the corridor. And looking at the lessons we've learned from the past, we wanted to do a handful of things, regionally, not just from Little Rock and North Little Rock's perspective. Some of those things included – to improve pedestrian connectivity. You know, when you have a huge berm of dirt, that separates the east and west side, it becomes a huge barrier. That's been discussed tonight. We wanted to create a plan and an amendment to the long range plan that allowed for better connectivity from a pedestrian standpoint, but as well as from the standpoint of public transit and from biking/hiking, that type of activity, especially with the River Trail. Secondly, one of the big things we wanted to look at was pedestrian safety because you can't have quality of place if people are worried or feared for their life as they're crossing a street. And so we thought that was important as this process moved forward. Thirdly, we looked at the improved traffic flow in and out of both of the downtown areas, recognizing that the traffic of the employment coming in and going out was important as well. Lastly, we wanted to improve vehicular safety. As I stated a few minutes ago, if you have an accident on that bridge today, you're there for hours, not minutes. For that reason, and many more that I could talk about over the next 18 minutes that I'm not going to get, we ask that you vote in favor of the plan amendment.

ROHN MUSE, Little Rock, 72204

Thank you very much for allowing us to come before you this evening. My name is Rohn Muse and I'm president of Forest Hill Neighborhood Association. Where is that? Well, it's just south of 630 and across the freeway from UAMS. And the big mistake that everyone has alluded to, was in the late-70s/early 80s when the city was divided by creating what was called Wilbur D. Mills Freeway. I have been a homeowner and occupier of that home for 30 years in that area. And our boundaries are Jonesboro to Pine, I-630 to 12th Street. And recently I was invited to be a member of a steering committee for Jump Start. I hope you're familiar with that, and what that is, and what an opportunity that presents for this area of town that has not been the receiving end of much, as others have been. But we have been given an earmark from the city, the city tax, almost \$5 million in infrastructure for our area. And a lot of that's already been done. And our job on the steering committee is to sell the idea of industry moving into that area, businesses moving into that area and getting it developed. For the plan, that's been worked out. And we need to know what 630 is going to look like. Because I don't want to try to sell something that I don't fully understand myself. So I think that we need to come to a screeching halt. We need to look at what the highway department proposes, what Metroplan proposes, for I-630, before anything is done because everyone has talked about what this will do to build one of these plans on the table. It will bottleneck at 630. So it's bound to happen. It's already been approved to widen 630 up to University. It's only a matter of time, it's going to come to us. I want to know what that's going to look like so I can be prepared when I'm trying to sell to businesses to move into the Jump Start area. Thank you.