

STATEMENT OF HON. RAFAEL ANCHIA AND ANGELA HUNT  
Trinity Parkway Advisory Committee Members  
Submitted to the Transportation and Trinity River Project Committee  
of the Dallas City Council  
March 21, 2016

*REP. RAFAEL ANCHIA:*

1. Mayor and Members of the Council. We are thankful that we are assembled here today revisiting our community's vision for what is Dallas' greatest natural asset, the Trinity Park. We are grateful to Councilwoman Greyson for inviting us to participate in this advisory process alongside a group of Dallas' thought leaders. At our first meeting, we were all asked by Larry Beasley to serve as the "conscience" through which to filter the Dream Team proposal.
2. We narrowly avoided a calamity in 3C --- which until today, is **THE CITY'S DOMINANT VISION** for the Park. 3C would have done great violence to the Park while failing to provide any Park access. I view where we are today as a "near miss". Thanks to leadership of Dallas philanthropists and Mayor Rawlings, the Dream Team was brought in to re-imagine the Park. The Dream Team emphatically concluded that **3C IS NOT NEEDED**. That's **YUGE**, as some might say. For years, many of you and us saying the same thing were publicly attacked and derided as cranks and worse. After today, we hope the Dallas City Council comes to the same conclusion as the Dream Team – **that the massive toll road IS NOT NEEDED**.
3. The Dream Team's vision of the "**Park-as-Client**" is a major intellectual pivot when compared to the "**Toll-road-centric**" vision articulated in 3C. However, for those who expected a low-speed meandering park access road, **YOU WILL BE SORLEY DISAPPOINTED. IT HIT US THE FIRST TIME WE SAW THE SIMULATION. IT FEELS TOO BIG AND MOVES TOO FAST.** We have tried to be self-critical and open-minded to determine whether we were being too harsh in our assessment of the Dream Team vision. After all, they are the world-class experts -- and what do we know? We feel like we are smarter than the average bear on this issue, but were just lawyers.
4. And then the Greyson Appointees sought outside help to check how we were evaluating the Dream Team product. We learned that the most forward-thinking cities are redeveloping their waterfronts and other natural resources by removing highways as opposed to adding them. They are opting for low-speed Park access roads, instead, to maximize the economic development potential of those natural assets. **So we asked ourselves if the "Park is the Client", how would a group of experts like the Dream Team design a highway running through it?** And that is because the task of the Dream Team was to make the highway fit the Park. The "Park is the Client", but with one big caveat, the Client has to swallow a highway - and look as good as possible doing it.
5. When we sought some outside counsel on the issue, we lamented to the experts that we were just regular citizens -- not traffic and transportation experts – but we were troubled by the size and scope of the proposal. We said we were being told it was a low-speed parkway, but it still looked and felt like a highway. The expert sort of laughed and said, "if it looks like a highway and feels like a highway, then it is a highway".

6. BUT we wanted to go beyond the intuitive “eye and gut” check. So we did some more research on park roads. Even a non-exhaustive review showed that MANY STATES AND CITIES LIMIT SPEEDS in public parks to 30mph or less.

- The City of Chicago, IL uses Automated Speed Enforcement to set Park Zone speeds at 30mph between the hours of 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- New York City has lowered the speed limit within Central Park to 20mph.
- TXPW almost uniformly posts speeds at its public parks at 30mph or slower. Why? Because they are focused on Parks.

7. So Mayor and members, it's not 3C and thank the Lord, Larry Beasley and the Dream Team for **moving us in the right direction**. But it's still a Highway. Period. Full stop.

8. And that's the issue that might make you as policymakers uncomfortable. Because it did us. If the Park is the Client, common thinkin' might suggest that you should act in the best interest of the Client. That's why I would suggest to you that a Park access road is in the best interest of the Client and a Highway is not. With that refined mandate, Mayor Rawlings and members, we are confident that we can go farther and do better. My colleague Angela Hunt will give you some ideas how.

*FORMER COUNCILMEMBER ANGELA HUNT:*

As a Councilmember, I lived by the motto, "Trust, but verify."

We were told that this road has a design speed of 45 mph, but as we investigated the geometry of the road -- the curves, the lane widths, the deceleration lanes -- we discovered that the road would actually accommodate much higher speeds:

- The curves on this road are twice -- up to FOUR TIMES -- bigger than roads designed for 45 mph
- The acceleration lanes out of the parking areas are up to three football fields long. That's unnecessary for a park road
- The lanes were widened from street widths to highway widths
- The shoulders went from grass, to gravel

At every decision tree, at every fork in the road, design choices were made to make the road straighter, wider, longer, and faster.

The geometry of this road matters, because there will be incredible pressure for this road to go faster. The NTTA will seek faster speeds for more toll revenue. Drivers trying to bypass our city will want to go as fast as possible.

Chisholm Trail in Fort Worth presents a cautionary tale. It's an NTTA toll road that cuts through a sensitive area -- neighborhoods -- and the community wanted a slower, winding parkway. Fort Worth and the NTTA agreed to a design speed and posted speed of 50 mph. But just 18 months after it opened, suburban drivers are complaining. They want to go faster. And because the design of this road -- its geometry -- won't prohibit higher speeds, the NTTA and City of Fort Worth are working on raising the speed limit.

The same thing will happen in Dallas. So unless we design the Trinity Parkway to be a slow road, it will be a fast one.

It is critical that we get this right before moving ahead to the next phase of "65% design." Once this project is 65% designed, it will be difficult to change course. I've sat in your seat. Once you spend an additional \$2-3m on design work, and wait an additional year to a year and a half for the results, you will have a hard time changing course because of all the time and money that's been spent. So we have to get it right, right now.

The first step is opening up this conversation. The public has been excluded from this process, and this project is far too important to be decided behind closed doors. Seek out public comment, and more than that, change the design in response to public comment. Appoint a true citizens oversight committee and empower them. Give them authority to stop the process and bring the project back to the council if it goes off track.

Let's realize the promise that was made last year. Let's put the park first. Not the road, not the RODs. But the PARK.