

Uptown takes public transit into its own hands: Sick of waiting for METRO, district unveils rapid plan

January 30, 2013

Whitney Radley



With METRORail's [University](#) and [Uptown](#) lines indefinitely stalled — development held up locally by the transit authority's recent bond referendum and [obstructed on a federal scale](#) by U.S. Rep. John Culberson — the [Uptown Houston Management District](#) has long understood that it must take matters of public transportation into its own hands.

Uptown Houston president John Breeding likens the office market of the area to downtown Pittsburg or Cleveland, cities where

mass transit is an integral component. And he acknowledges that METRO isn't in the fiscal shape to handle expanded operations in the underserved area for at least a few decades.

"Transit is just too important to us to wait that long," Breeding tells CultureMap.

"We envision something that most people would refer to as 'bus rapid transit.' "

For a \$177 million mobility plan worked out

in earnest over the past several years, Uptown Houston enlisted the support of METRO, the Texas Department of Transportation and the [City of Bellaire](#) to propose an alternative solution that [includes](#) connection to the [Northwest Transit Center](#) via the 610 West Loop, dedicated bus lanes along Post Oak Boulevard and a Westpark Transit Center and parking facility in Bellaire, near the intersection of Highway 59 and 610.

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refer to as 'bus rapid transit,' " says Breeding, who anticipates a level of service equivalent to light rail (fast travel times, elevated platforms, low, handicap-accessible bus decks), but with increased flexibility and a lower cost.

The current state of affairs already necessitates improved conditions, but future development — including the [BLVD Place expansion](#), Skanska's [high rise office building](#) and the nearly-complete [BBVA Compass Plaza](#) — will only bring more businesses, residents, visitors and congestion.

Funding for the project would come from Uptown Houston, the [Uptown TIRZ/UDA](#) and federal grants applied for late last year. Breeding is "anticipating a yes" on approval of the latter, given the enthusiasm and support of area stakeholders.

Breeding says that, pending receipt of federal dollars, Uptown Houston

should finalize right-of-way purchase along Post Oak by the end of 2013, with utility work beginning shortly after. Construction would officially begin in 2015.

The METRO board [agreed in Sept. 2012](#) to operate the bus route if the plan is realized, and Breeding says that the infrastructure will be in place for a future light rail — should that ever materialize, somewhere down the road.