



CITY OF HOUSTON

John Whitmire

Mayor

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April 24, 2025

The Honorable Tom Craddick – Committee Chair
House Committee on Transportation

RE: House Bill 5177

Honorable Chairman Craddick and Members of the House Committee on Transportation,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide and share this written testimony in support of the House Committee Substitute of House Bill 5177 (CSHB 5177). This bill provides much-needed resources to our Houston Fire Department (HFD) that support our fire fighters when responding to incidents along the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA).

The Houston Fire Department is responsible for responding to calls for service on the 198 miles of tollways within the City's jurisdiction. From EMS calls to large chemical spills, our fire fighters respond. From 2022 to 2024, there was a total of 8,271 calls for service for the Houston Fire Department. That equates to 15,651 apparatus deployed and approximately 54,778 firefighters on the toll roads responding to incidents in three years. Of note, these numbers do not include calls for service outside of the City of Houston jurisdiction.

The uniqueness within the Harris County community is that the Houston Fire Department is the largest, regional department that can provide the lifesaving services that our firefighters provide. The department responds to every crash requiring medical treatment, every extrication, every HAZMAT response, every technical rescue that requires special training and other instances. All of this service we provide proudly under our ethical, moral, and statutory obligation to respond, and none of which have been or is reimbursed by HCTRA.

To give further context to the breadth and depth to the Houston Fire Department's response, an incident on the tollway is not a one-unit-operation. A typical wreck may include:

- 13 HFD First Responders
- A 9-1-1 call taker and a dispatcher
- A fire engine with four members
- An EMS unit with two members
- An ambulance supervisor or district chief
- A ladder truck to serve as a blocking vehicle
- And in some cases, specialized equipment or rescue squads

Furthermore, costs associated with a in incident response, does not include the cascading effects of vehicle maintenance and the depleting resources when the next call comes in. For example, the 364 responses we made on just one segment of the Beltway last year required 593 apparatus. Across the city, 42 stations with 129 units and over 375 personnel are positioned in proximity to toll roads. These units aren't dedicated solely to toll roads, but when an incident occurs there, they are the

ones who go. HCTRA is getting the benefit of the scale of our world-class fire department without supporting it financially.

HFD has been and will continue to be responsive to the toll road, yet our commitment at times comes at the risk of our people. Our teams are out there on the toll road, securing scenes and are at risk of being hit from speeding drivers. While no number of resources can be enough for a life that is impacted when responding to tollway incidents, HB 5177 is a step in the right direction to providing more equitable support to our first responders so that they can be safer and better secured when responding to incidents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' and 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

Thomas Muñoz
Chief, Houston Fire Department

Total Incidents for FEM (Motor Vehicle) and FEPD (Pedestrian)				
	2022	2023	2024	Total
Hardy Toll Road	33	28	33	94
Westpark Tollroad	25	58	70	153
Sam Houston Toll Road/Beltway 8	2209	2818	2997	8024

Total Dispatches for FEM (Motor Vehicle) and FEPD (Pedestrian)				
	2022	2023	2024	Total
Hardy Toll Road	94	77	91	262
Ambulance	20	17	19	56
EMS Supervisor	1			1
Engine	49	48	52	149
Ladder	17	8	15	40
Medic	7	4		16
Westpark Tollway	68	158	202	428
Ambulance	14	33	44	91
EMS Supervisor		1	2	3
Engine	37	78	101	216
Ladder	14	42	47	103
Medic	3	2		10
Squad			1	1
Unlisted		2	2	4
Sam Houston Tollway/Beltway 8	4205	5165	5555	14925
Ambulance	957	1174	1181	3312
Cascade Truck		1		1
District Chief	2	6		15
EMS Supervisor	20	28	32	80
Engine	2509	3060	3306	8875
Haz Mat Foam		1		1
Haz Mat Truck	3	9		18
Ladder	527	593	698	1818
Man Power Unit	12	20	8	40
Medic	173	216	235	624
Medical Safety Unit (ARFF)			1	1
Other		1	2	3
Rehab Truck		1		1
Rescue Truck	1	3	5	9
Safety Officer		1	2	3
Shift Commander		1		1
Squad	1	15	20	36
Village Ladder			1	1
Unlisted		35	51	86

Total Arriving Units for FEM (Motor Vehicle) and FEPD (Pedestrian)				
	2022	2023	2024	Total
Hardy Toll Road	72	45	63	180
Ambulance	18	12	14	44
EMS Supervisor	1			1
Engine	37	29	34	100
Ladder	13	3	10	26
Medic	3	1	5	9
Westpark Tollway	45	105	145	295
Ambulance	11	23	36	70
EMS Supervisor			1	1
Engine	25	58	73	156
Ladder	6	21	29	56
Medic	3	2	5	10
Unlisted		1	1	2
Sam Houston Tollway/Beltway 8	3,425	4,248	4,557	12,230
Ambulance	796	967	991	2,754
Cascade Truck		1		1
District Chief	1	5	6	12
EMS Supervisor	6	9	18	33
Engine	2,098	2,619	2,801	7,518
Haz Mat Foam		1		1
Haz Mat Truck	1	9	6	16
Ladder	374	409	484	1,267
Man Power Unit	7	18	6	31
Medic	142	164	184	490
Other		1	1	2
Rehab Truck		1		1
Rescue Truck		1	4	5
Safety Officer		1	2	3
Shift Commander		1		1
Squad		10	15	25
Village Ladder			1	1
Unlisted		31	38	69

Cost of Readiness – Capital Vehicle Acquisition				
	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Total FY 2022 - 2024
HFD	\$15,122,227	\$6,985,171	\$ 3,320,566	\$ 25,427,964
HPD	\$14,640,267	\$4,119,887	\$17,711,694	\$ 36,471,847
Total				\$ 61,899,811

Cost of Readiness – Capital Equipment Acquisition				
	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Total FY 2022 - 2024
HFD	\$ 526,411	\$ 914,088	\$ 1,896,933	\$ 3,337,431
HPD	\$ 3,117,145	\$ 728,687	\$ 5,784,771	\$ 9,630,602
Total				\$ 12,968,033

Cost of Readiness – Personnel Responding to Incident				
	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Total FY 2022 - 2024
HFD	\$10,026,142	\$2,634,285	\$15,306,824	\$ 27,967,251
HPD	\$ 4,228,206	\$4,339,504	\$ 4,205,903	\$ 12,773,613
Total				\$ 40,740,864