



Date: July 24, 2007  
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## NEWS RELEASE

### COMMISSIONERS COURT NAMES MARK ELLIS CHAIRMAN OF GULF COAST FREIGHT RAIL DISTRICT BOARD

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett announced today that former Houston City Council member Mark Ellis has been appointed to head the Gulf Coast Freight Rail District Board for the next two years.

Ellis, a certified financial planner and senior vice president with First Albany Capital, is a former three-term member of Houston City Council. His appointment was approved jointly by Houston Mayor Bill White and Harris County Commissioners Court.

As chairman of the Freight Rail District, Ellis will help oversee the development of freight and commuter rail in Harris and Fort Bend counties. The 11-member board helps ensure that future freight rail projects balance the need for continued economic growth with neighborhood protection and transportation needs.

“With Mark Ellis as chairman of the freight rail board, residents of Harris and Fort Bend counties can be sure that they have someone smart and independent overseeing their interests,” said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. “Mark and his colleagues on the board will ensure that we continue to address the area’s crucial transportation needs while continuing to protect our homes, schools and neighborhoods.”

Among the issues the board will be facing are several issues addressed in the Houston Region Freight Rail Study released this week.

The study, a combined effort of Harris County and the Texas Department of Transportation, addresses mobility issues relating to freight rail throughout eight regional counties -- Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Liberty, Waller, Chambers, Brazoria and Galveston – and is part of the statewide analysis of the rail network.

“Harris County took the lead in initiating the first study to address improvements in mobility and safety for train and vehicular traffic within the City of Houston and unincorporated areas of the county,” Emmett said. “The study noted improvements to existing infrastructure that would lessen freight rail impact in neighborhoods.”

The report is intended to be the basis for discussions on the future of freight rail transportation in Texas. It provides a broad perspective on the issues and possible solutions. For a summary of the study, please visit: <http://www.houstonrailplan.com/>.