The proposed system will call attention to the imbalanced priorities in our public spending. Its mere presence will call out to onlookers to “re” in every aspect of their daily life and force a transition to new forms of infrastructure networks and new forms of public architectures that prompt us to re-evaluate how we live.

The re-WAY is simple: It is to re-consider, re-think, re-connect, re-vitalize, re-prioritize, re-use, re-purpose, re-distribute and re-design public architecture to meet people’s needs. We propose to re-purpose the networked infrastructure of the HOV lane, a system that today carries just over 200,000 passengers and drivers daily, into a bike-way – with non-stop, easy access service to many points throughout the city.

Our proposal is as purposeful as the Hoover Dam and as big as Daniel Burnham ever imagined.

What is the incentive for Houstonians and people throughout the U.S. to change their mode of transportation from automobiles to bikes? What type of infrastructure would it take to make this a reasonable alternative? And how can we combine investment in public works with investment in civic infrastructure that connects users to programs to networks.

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Strategies and Sites

The I-45 demonstration project points to the possibilities of re-purposing public infrastructure for people instead of automobiles; and re-prioritizing an imbalanced investment system, as illustrated by the State of Texas’ recent submittal for “shovel-ready” projects that weighted 80 to 1 in favor of freeways over transit.

Infrastructure and architecture clips build on the assets of strategic sites and the people who use them. To this end, the clips are adapted to particular site conditions with the goals of linking people to alternative transportation corridors, connecting them to educational opportunities, putting them to work, incubating ideas and connecting us all to our city.

On the re•WAY . . .

cyclists can break at the rest areas, feel at ease traveling at night with solar lighting, and evaluate the current air quality with strategically placed monitors. Sound and pollution filter walls are multi-functional, neutralizing pollutants, protecting riders and buffering noise.

Off the re•WAY . . .

a network of clips persuade cyclists to use the system – including park-and-cycle lots, bike racks and lockers, restrooms, water fountains, and strategically located showers. A reverse toll-way incentivizes cyclists by depositing tax credits into their account each day they use the system.

The I-45 Gulf Freeway corridor is home to some of Houston’s most densely populated residential communities. 250,000 people live along this corridor. Of the 96,895 who work, 68% drive to work alone, 20% carpool, 2% walk, and only 6% utilize public transit. The average travel time to work for people living along this corridor is 28.3 minutes. For two hours each day it would be faster to ride a bike than drive, and a person traveling on the re-WAY would cover the 8 mile corridor in 30 minutes.

150,000 live within a 1/2 mile of the Gulf Freeway Corridor, if 10% rode their bikes to work 15,000 cars could be taken off the street.
capturing energy

The core premise of the re-WAY is to repurpose infrastructure as a means to create connections in ways that enhance communities. The objectives are to balance Federal spending on people-centered vs. auto-centered projects and to provide a practical alternative to the automobile in sprawling cities.

Houston is a problem rich laboratory, it thinks itself the energy capital, it is an oil happy city, and it is home to a steadily increasing population of 2.2 million consumers who regularly navigate more than 575 miles of freeways spread across 627 square miles. Houstonians spend an average of over 4½ hours commuting between their home and work every week—over 230 hours per year—double that number for two working adults and the family is generating 20,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year. These are the reasons that we make up 5% of the world’s population but generate 45% of CO₂ emissions across the globe.

Half of Houston’s freeways have HOV lanes. Every day the lanes carry over 200,000 drivers and passengers, 43,225 by bus, 2,500 by vanpool, 74,687 by carpool, and 407 by motorcycle. While the HOV lanes provide a viable alternative to the single occupancy vehicle, the billions of dollars invested in the network do not challenge sprawl, a sedentary society, or the challenges facing our environment. We are not proposing to eliminate the HOV lanes; instead we want to add an alternative to the “alternative transportation” pot, by creating bike lanes in the existing HOV’s and creating a new diamond lane in the left lane of the freeway, ultimately generating greater flexibility for drivers and cyclists.
clips

Site 1:
Columbia Tap

The Columbia Tap site is located in Houston’s Third Ward – here 1 out of 3 people either walk, cycle or take public transit to work. The re-WAY at this site is linked to the Columbia Tap trail, a “rails to trails” project, that links the neighborhood to Downtown and the Texas Medical Center – where there are more than 200,000 jobs.

The infrastructural clips at this site include bike racks, restrooms, and water fountains. The architectural clips are a bike repair shop, borrowed from the neighborhood, and spot incubators – small spaces to build local entrepreneurship.

Site 2:
Eastwood Transit Center/University of Houston

The Eastwood Transit Center site is directly adjacent to the University of Houston, the standard array of infrastructural clips are just off the re-WAY including a park-and-cycle lot, bike racks, restrooms, and water fountains.

Here the re-WAY expands and becomes a super park – with a new parking structure, housing, and services for students, spot incubator spaces all that serve the more than 40,000 people living and learning in the immediate vicinity.
clips

Site 3:
Brays Bayou Park

The Brays Bayou site is located adjacent to the massive effort of Project Brays, a nearly $450 million dollar infrastructure investment project to improve flood control and add amenities, including trails, along the waterway. The re-WAY connects users to the more than 30 miles of trails along the bayou that link to the East End and Port, the University of Houston, The Texas Medical Center, Rice University and greater southwest. The site is also home to a new single-room occupancy housing project serving people transitioning out of homelessness. The re-WAY connects the residents to educational opportunities at Houston Community College and multiple employment centers through one of the most economic and efficient modes of transportation.

Site 4:
Houston Community College, Gulfgate

The final demonstration site illustrates the capacity to create infrastructural and social links through strategic connections. At this site, an average of 80 day laborers congregate in front of the Home Depot daily, directly across the freeway is the campus of Houston Community College Southeast that provides many vocational, job-training and ESL classes. The re-WAY here links the two points together.

The infrastructural clips include a park-and-cycle lot in a parking garage, bike racks, restrooms, water fountains and showers (a benefit for those who work outside in the heat all day).

The re-WAY infrastructural clips include bike racks, restrooms, and water fountains. The architectural clips are a new boat launch for kayaks and canoes on the banks of Brays Bayou, and a bike share program. Spot incubators could soon find a home here.

Architectural clips are compacted into the new super park which includes a day labor center where workers can be certified in framing, brick laying and so on to guarantee fair wages for their skills, a new transit center, construction skills demonstration and education program, and spot incubator spaces. The proposed intervention also frees up two surface parking lots (at Home Depot and HCC) to be re-purposed for public programs.