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AIA Dallas Committee on the Environment and Communities by Design Committee Topic: IH-345

IH-345 is an elevated high speed road constructed in the early 1970's as a connector between IH-45 in south Dallas to Central Expressway in the north. Construction coincided with the rapid expansion of interstate highways throughout America, often cutting paths through intercity neighborhoods, displacing residents and disrupting a city's urban fabric. IH-345 created a divide between downtown Dallas and East Dallas. Now nearing the end of its planned lifespan, the elevated roadway is currently due for replacement or reconstruction.

The central business districts of many North American cities have experienced significant revivals in the last two decades. As reinvestment in infrastructure occurs, Dallas should continue to build on progress that has been made in creating a vibrant, liveable urban environment. Traditional freeways like the IH-345 create acres of underutilized real estate whose redevelopment could contribute to the revitalization of downtown and adjacent neighborhoods as well as restore lost connectivity between these areas.

AIA Dallas encourages the continued growth of varied transportation options with vehicular access as one component of a multimodal approach. Transportation should focus on strengthening connections to downtown Dallas as a regional destination, while also providing enhanced connectivity to the surrounding communities. An emphasis on improving the pedestrian environment will contribute to the continued growth and redevelopment of downtown as a vibrant and liveable urban environment.

AIA Dallas recommends an integrated study with input from the primary stakeholders such as City of Dallas elected officials, surrounding land owners, residents and design professionals. Future studies of IH-345 should include consideration of alternate solutions including the removal of the elevated highway. Whether through an at-grade boulevard or other solution, the restored connections and potential redevelopment options should be fully explored. The long-term economic and cultural benefits of a downtown that is seamlessly connected to the vibrant East Dallas, Deep Ellum and Lower Greenville communities are without measure. That goal should be paramount in the planning of all projects in this area.