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## NEWS RELEASE

### **Construction Begins on Mason Park Ped/Bike Bridge along Brays Bayou Greenway**

*Bridge in East End Will Provide Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing over Brays Bayou*

HOUSTON, TX – March 21, 2017 – On Tuesday morning, Mayor Sylvester Turner, Houston Parks Board, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and the Texas Department of Transportation celebrated the groundbreaking of the Mason Park Ped/Bike Bridge along Brays Bayou Greenway. The bridge, located in Houston’s East End in Mason Park, is eagerly anticipated by community members and will facilitate safe pedestrian and bike crossings of Brays Bayou. It will also give residents on either side of the park access to the 30-mile Brays Bayou Greenway trail network, which is currently in development as part of the Bayou Greenways 2020 project.

Funding for the project comes from a federal Transportation Enhancement grant selected for funding by the Houston-Galveston Area Council and administered by TxDOT; a local match from the City of Houston; the Houston Parks and Recreation Department; council district service funds from Council Member Robert Gallegos, District I; and private contributions raised by Houston Parks Board. Construction will cost approximately \$5.7 million.

“This is such an exciting time, not just for the Lawndale/Wayside community, but for the entire City of Houston thanks to multiple initiatives underway to enhance our parks and our hike-and-bike trails,” said Mayor Turner. “The Mason Park Bridge and the Bayou Greenways 2020 project are preeminent examples of what we can achieve when we work together.”

The custom-designed bridge, which will be 16 feet wide and stretch 485 feet across Brays Bayou, will become an iconic landmark and community meeting place along Brays Bayou Greenway with cables extending from 70-foot tall towers, lighting and plazas with seating at each landing. Construction will be managed by TxDOT and is expected to be complete by spring 2018.

“This bridge will be an essential community connector for the East End and surrounding neighborhoods and an integral link in the Bayou Greenways 2020 network,” said Beth White, President & CEO of Houston Parks Board. “The enhanced recreational and active transportation opportunities this bridge will create will bring Houstonians closer to greenspaces and one another.”

The bridge will be accessible to people of all physical abilities. It will connect to the Brays Bayou Greenway hike-and-bike trails, allowing residents access to area schools, public services, employment centers, transit services and businesses.

“This project represents a signature effort in the East End to unite communities on the north and south sides of Brays Bayou with a safe, alternative transportation, pedestrian and bike route through Mason Park,” said Council Member Gallegos, whose district encompasses Mason Park and the surrounding communities. “In addition to supporting this bridge, I have allocated funds to enhance lighting at the park, construct a new 8-foot-wide trail spanning over half a mile and develop a master plan for the first time in the park’s history – approximately \$750,000 worth of improvements to Mason Park in total.”

“This project has been on our radar for many years, and we are thankful to all our partners who have helped fund it,” said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. “We are excited to be able to link the two sides of Mason Park so patrons will be able to cross the bayou safely. I am pleased to be able to see it begin and look forward to its completion.”

“We are happy to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Mason Park Ped/Bike Bridge,” said Quincy Allen, Houston District Engineer, Texas Department of Transportation. “This project and trail represent a key connecting link to the Brays Bayou Greenway trail network. We are happy to have played a role in the process.”

Bayou Greenways 2020 is a public-private partnership between the nonprofit Houston Parks Board, the City of Houston and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and is being implemented in close collaboration with the Harris County Flood Control District, which manages the county’s bayous and creeks for drainage and flood risk reduction. Bayou Greenways 2020 will transform 3,000 acres of underutilized land along nine major waterways and create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston’s major waterways.

In 2012, thanks in part to the “Parks By You!” campaign, Houston voters overwhelmingly approved a bond proposal that set aside \$100 million for Bayou Greenways 2020. Houston Parks Board is raising a matching \$120 million and is managing acquisition, design and construction of the Bayou Greenways. More than \$103 million has been raised to date, including an historic \$50 million donation from the Kinder Foundation.

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A nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing access to quality parks and greenspace for all people, **Houston Parks Board** creates, improves, protects and advocates for parkland in the Greater Houston region. Since 1976, the organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government and community relationships to improve parks large and small. Houston Parks Board is currently leading the transformational \$220 million Bayou Greenways 2020 project to create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston’s major waterways. For more information, visit [www.houstonparksboard.org](http://www.houstonparksboard.org).

**Bayou Greenways 2020** is one of the most ambitious parks projects in the U.S. By transforming more than 3,000 acres of underutilized land along Houston’s major waterways, Bayou Greenways 2020 will create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails. The \$220 million project will connect people, places and greenspace while enhancing air and water quality, preserving flood-prone areas and stimulating economic development in Houston.

The **Houston Parks and Recreation Department** (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).