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Commuter rail could be headed to Houston

by Alex Sanz / 11 News

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HOUSTON – The Gulf Coast Rail District, the entity created to design and develop regional commuter rail, has been given the go-ahead to begin a preliminary engineering study to establish commuter rail along the Northwest Freeway in Harris County.

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett said the study, which is being funded by federal stimulus dollars, was a first step – and one of the biggest.

“If you build it, they will come,” Emmett said. “I’ve seen it all over the world.”

The Northwest Freeway is notorious for its traffic congestion.

Congestion is expected to get worse as Harris County’s population grows.

The proposed commuter rail line would run along the Northwest Freeway from Houston to Hempstead – and may someday reach Austin.

The engineering study is expected to determine how many train stations to build – and where – and how many passengers would ride the rail into and out of Houston.

Passengers would be dropped off at METRO’s Northwest Transit Center, the Northwest Mall or another location.

METRO would then bus them to points across Houston.

A combination of federal, state and local dollars would pay the operating costs.

Mark Ellis, the chair of the Gulf Coast Rail District, said it was possible the rail line would be up and running in a few years.

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