

# Bridging the Gap: A New Future for the Silver Line

## A Bold Vision for Houston: Uptown's BRT Experiment

In 2020, after years of planning and construction, Houston METRO launched the state of Texas's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line. The 4.7-mile route introduced 10 new stations with off-board fare payment, high level platforms, and a fleet of 60 foot articulated buses. Center-running lanes on Post Oak Boulevard and an elevated transitway over I-610 enabled a far more reliable and high-capacity service than the local bus route it replaced.

Despite launching with high expectations, the Silver Line has consistently struggled to attract riders. Even before service was scaled back in the Summer of 2024 from buses every 12 minutes to every 20, and from 60 foot articulated buses to smaller vehicles, it routinely ranked among the least productive routes in the system. In April 2024, it averaged fewer than 9 boardings per service hour, placing it 76th out of 82 routes.



Two Silver Line buses travelling in transit only lanes on Post Oak Boulevard (Metro)

## Learning from the Past, Planning for the Future



While some argue for the Silver Line's removal, two key factors help explain low ridership: the COVID pandemic, which decimated transit ridership nationwide, as well as the line's relatively short length.

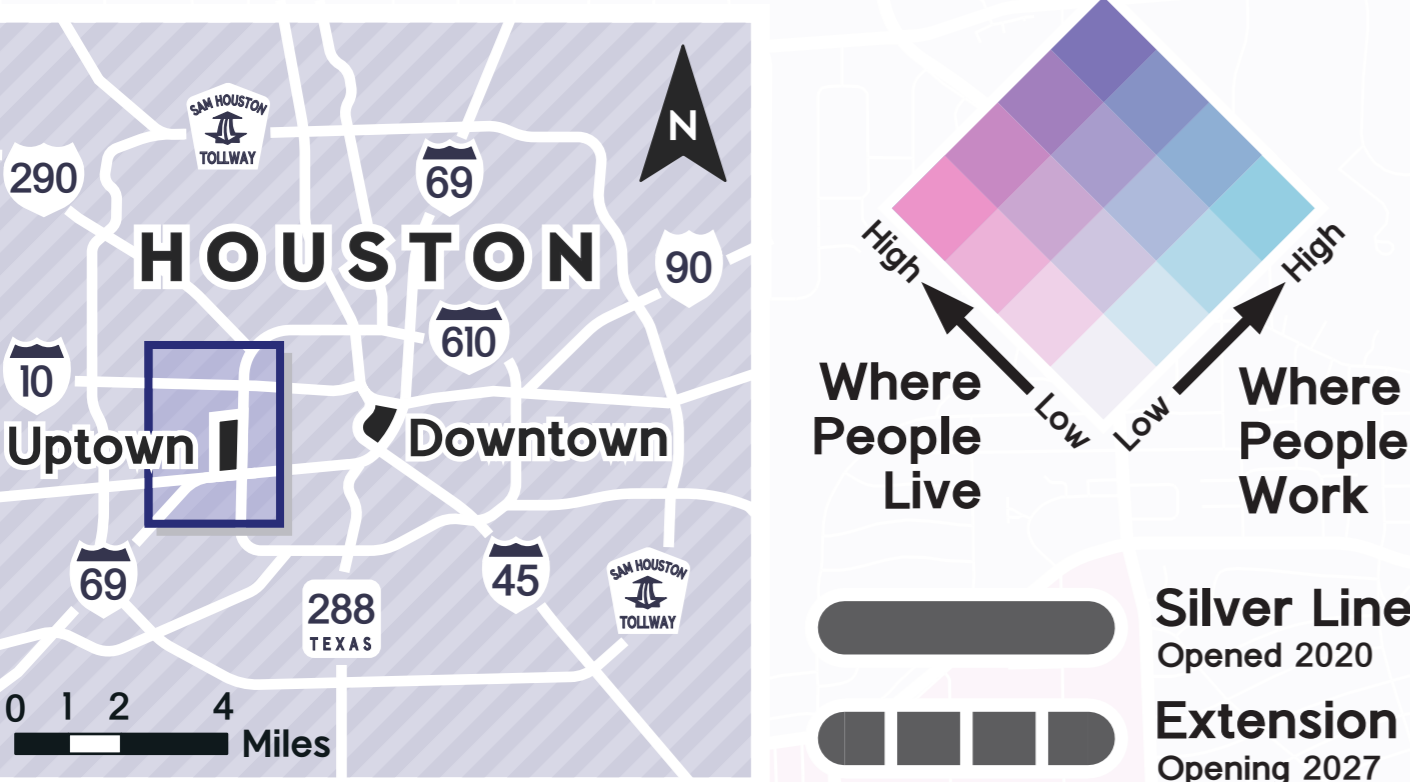
Local route 33, which the Silver Line replaced, drew 68% more riders in part due to pre-pandemic demand from office workers. Route 33 also connected Uptown more effectively to surrounding neighborhoods and crosstown bus routes to the north and south, unlike the Silver Line, which largely remains confined to Uptown.

To make the Silver Line more successful, Houston METRO has proposed a 4-mile southern extension into Gulfton, one of Houston's most transit-reliant and underserved areas.

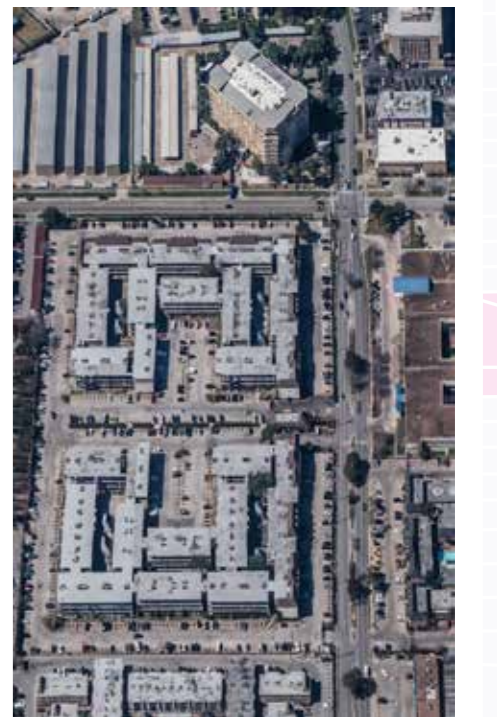
## the Silver Line in Context

ACS 2022 5 Year Estimates, US Census LEHD Employment Statistics

While the Silver Line serves thousands of jobs in Uptown and Houston's largest mall, the Galleria, it fails to connect key destinations to where people live. A southward extension (shown in dashes) into the Gulfton area would begin to bridge that gap.



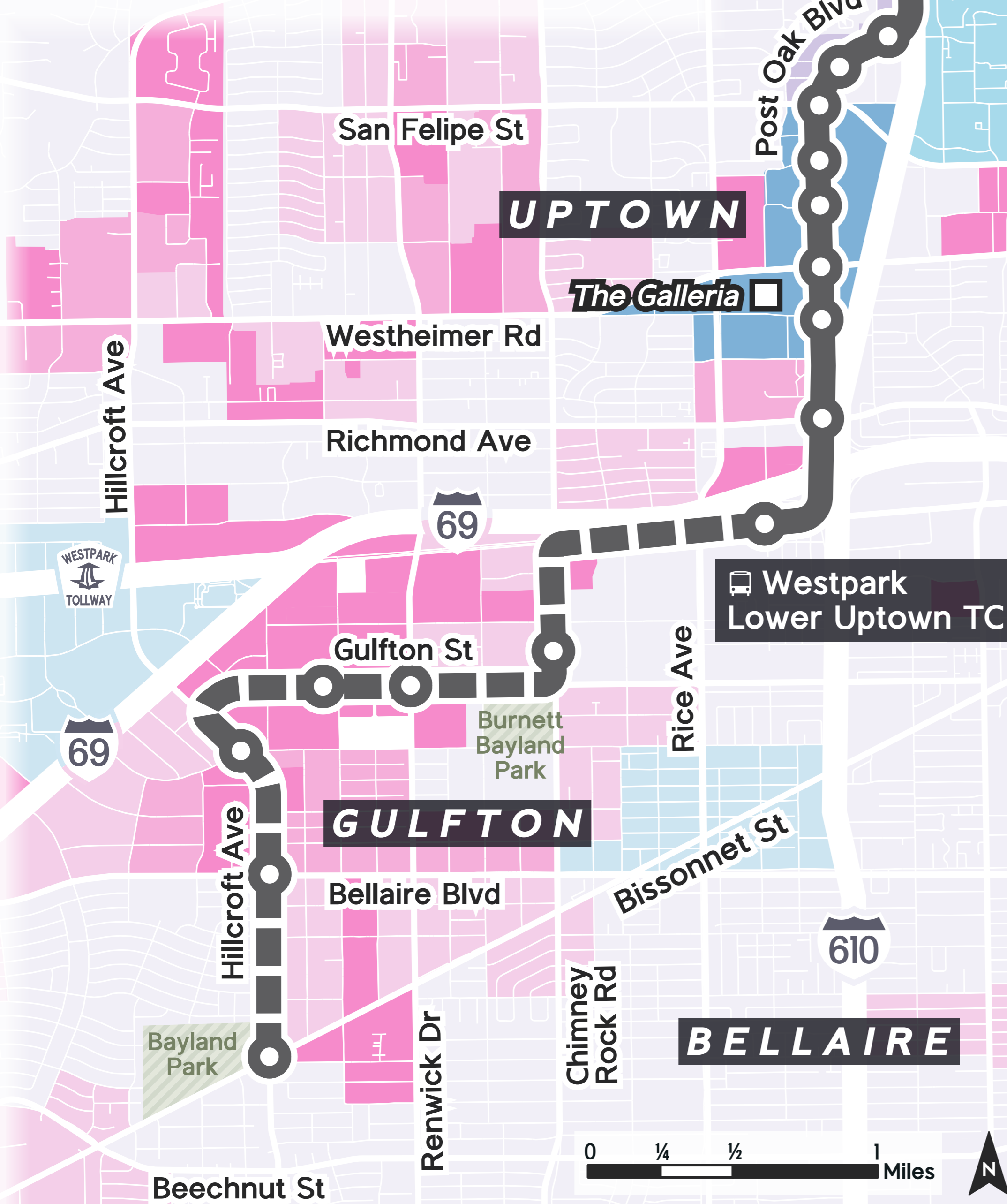
## What an Extension means for Gulfton



apartments on Gulfton Street (Bing 2025)

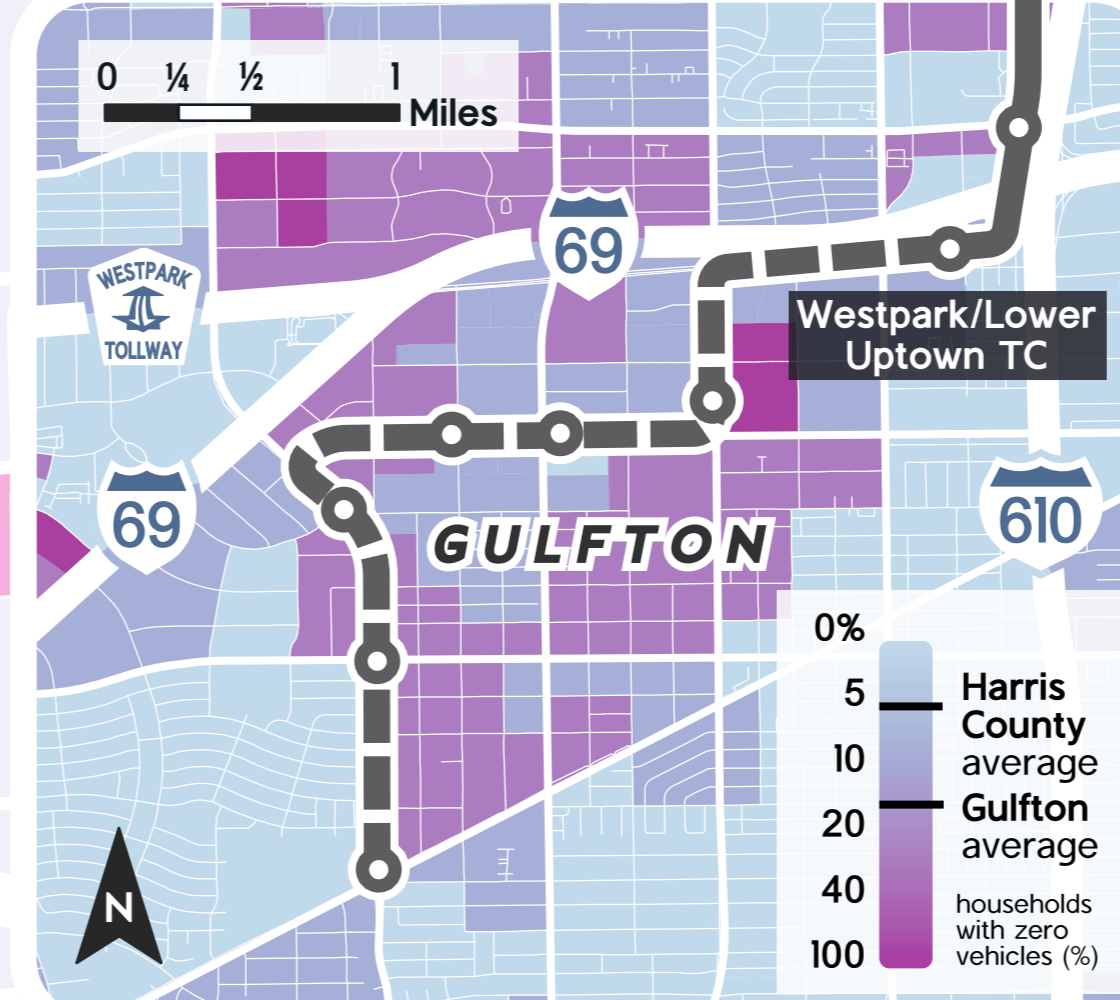
In the 1960s and 70s, the area between I-610, I-69, and the City of Bellaire saw rapid growth driven by Houston's oil boom. New apartment complexes attracted young workers from across the country. Following the economic downturn in the 1980s, many left, and landlords, facing financial strain, began renting to newly arrived immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Latin America.

Despite being seven miles from Downtown, Gulfton is Houston's most densely populated neighborhood. Its predominantly low income population relies heavily on public transit to get around. Though several frequent bus routes serve the area, Gulfton lacks reliable, high-capacity transit. A southward Silver Line extension would close this gap and link residents to Uptown, one of the city's largest job centers.



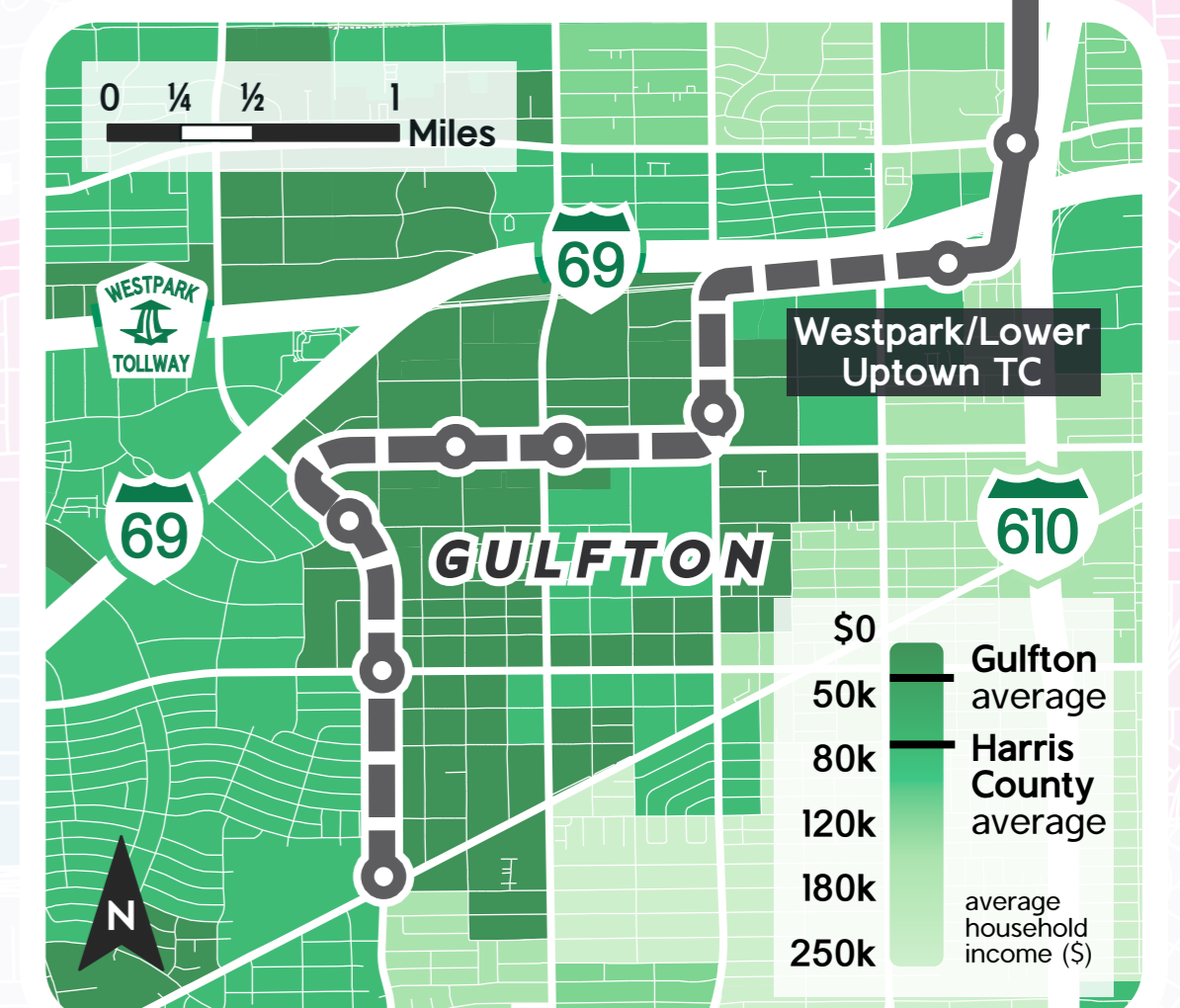
### Zero Vehicle Households

ACS 2022 5 Year Estimates



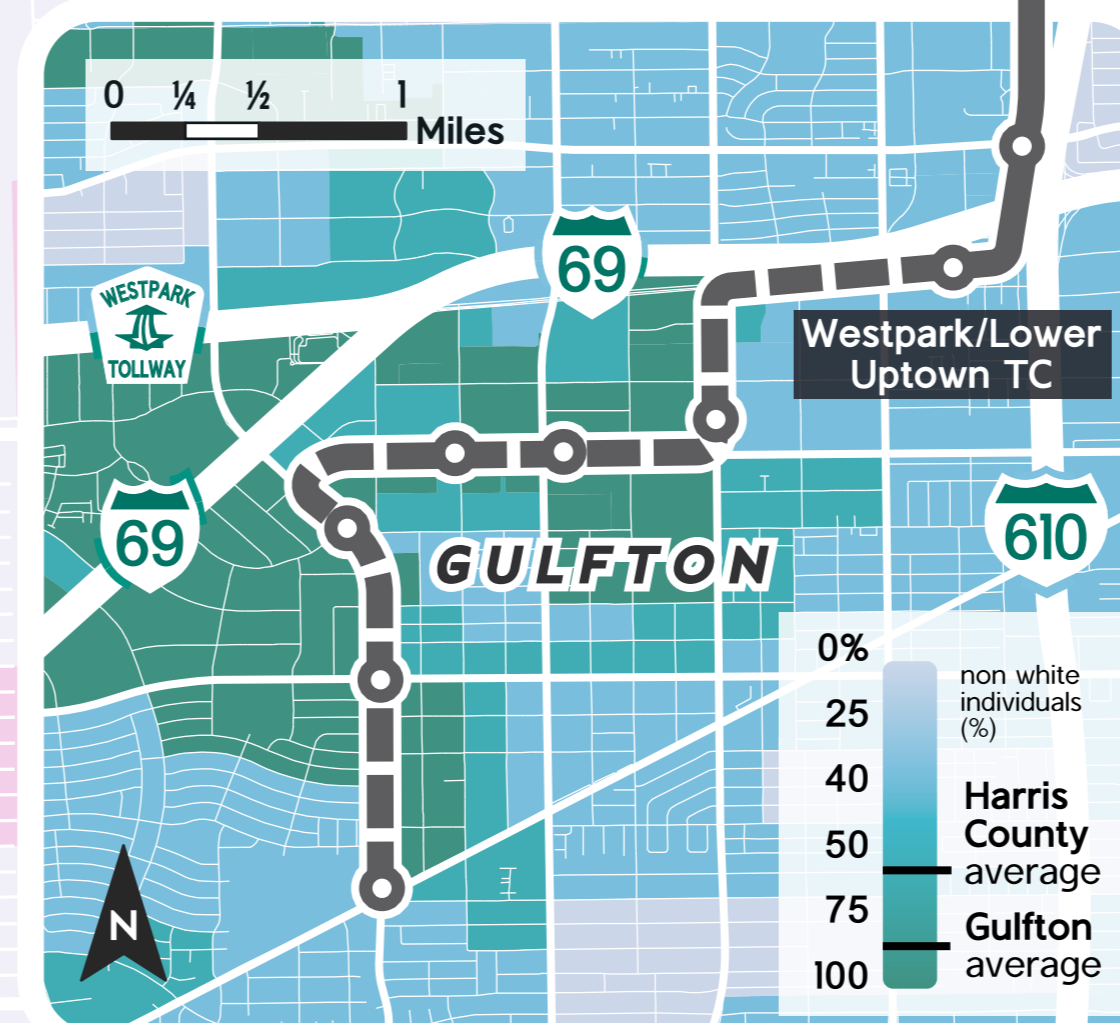
### Low-Income Population

ACS 2022 5 Year Estimates



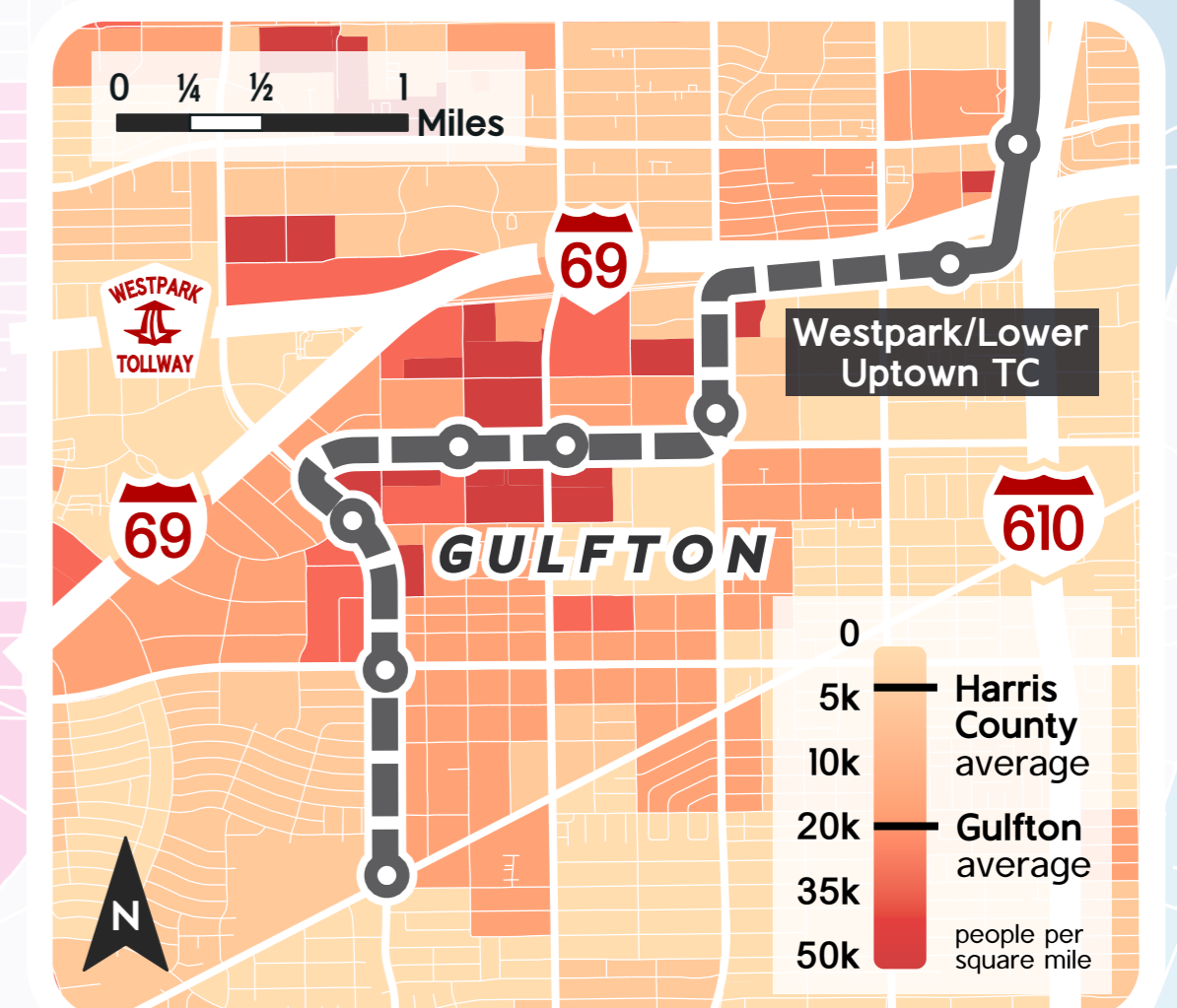
### Non-White Population

ACS 2022 5 Year Estimates



### Population Density

ACS 2022 5 Year Estimates



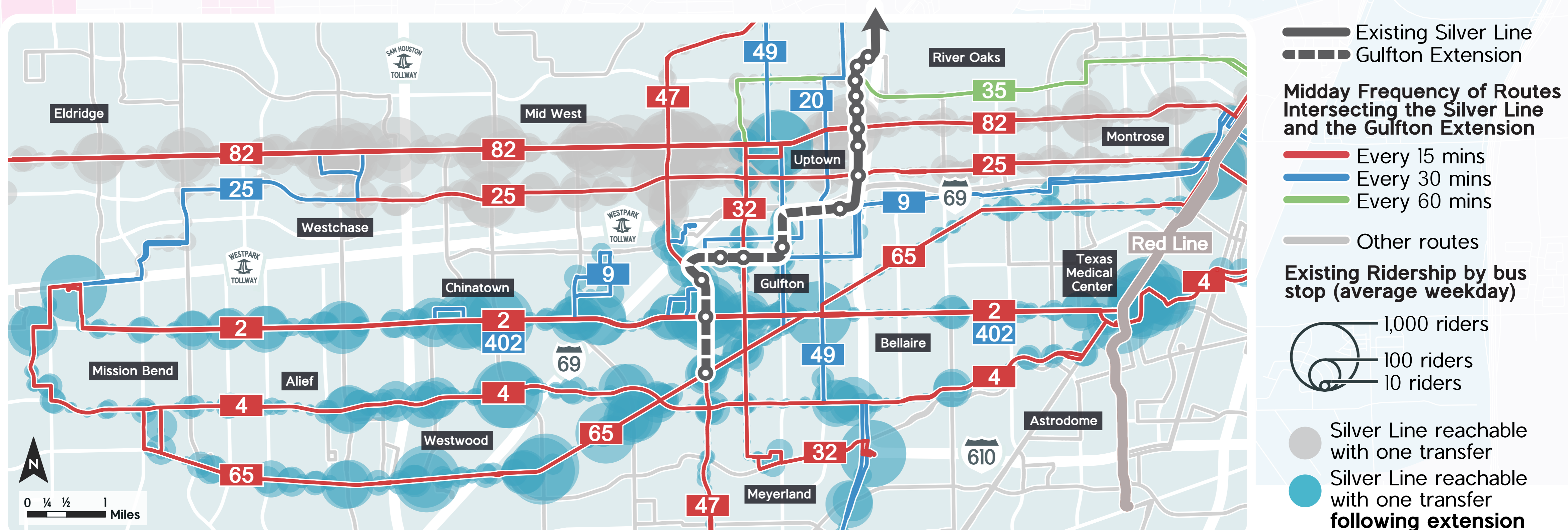
## New Connections, New Possibilities

2022 Houston METRO Ridership Data\*

While a Silver Line extension would directly improve access for Gulfton residents, benefits would be felt across the region. Key bus routes like the 2, 4, and 65 are some of the busiest in Houston

yet lack a connection to the Silver Line, forcing riders in Southwest Houston to make multiple transfers to reach Uptown. Extending the Silver Line would create faster, more reliable

connections to one of the region's largest activity centers as well as establish a high capacity transit spine that would better serve riders across the network, not just those along the corridor.



\*Ridership data was collected prior to November 2022 service changes. Routes displayed are as of the most recent service change in April 2025. Assumes a future Route 4 deviation to serve the Gulfton Extension at Hillcroft Ave and Bissonnet St.