

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Pensions, Investments & Financial Services  
For HB 3899

Compiled on: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 9:01 PM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

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Hearing Date: April 5, 2023 8:00 AM

Catherine Cocco

self

Austin, TX

I support HB3899. When Austin citizens voted for this, we were lied to, the costs are now out of control (with a blank check for even more graft!) and outcome (less rail and services) are not what we voted for. We need the state to help protect us against the deception and lies that the Austin City Departments/Project Connect have been feeding us. Give the citizens a chance to kill this poorly planned, conceived "Project Connect"

Taryn Hayes

Self

Austin, TX

No blank checks

Patricia Eure

Self

Austin, TX

I support HB 3899-NO "BLANK CHECKS" I didn't approve a blank check in 2020 and I DO NOT APPROVE of a blank check not.

Donna Burkett

Self

Austin, TX

I support HB 3899-NO "BLANK CHECKS", THE STATE MUST REQUIRE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND VOTER APPROVAL FOR ANY FUTURE DEBT OBLIGATION. The ATP must comply with the funding voters were told paid for the project and not have bonding ability; this legislation is a compromise. It empowers voters with a voice in the debt they are obligated to repay. Voters didn't approve a "blank check" in 2020 and most believed the record-historic tax increase was their full contribution. As Austin's mayor recently stated: "The voters gave approval in a within your means kind of budget." This project will damage the environment and tear up the city worse than it already is torn up. This project had no oversight or feasibility studies. Austin was sold a bill of goods! Support this BILL-HB 3899! Why can't we look at above ground alternatives that are much less destructive to our beautiful capitol city?

Rhesa Cook

retired

Austin, TX

I support HB3899. Please vote yes on this. Thank you.

Meg Wilson

Self. Retired Public Policy Expert

Austin, TX

I did NOT vote in support of Project Connect in 2020 and I support it even less in 2023 because the cost of the project has gone from ridiculous to ruinous! I didn't like the funding proposal originally and now the premise of it has become scary. While other proposals in the Legislature are trying to reduce our property tax burden, this one could undo all that good work by changing what Project Connect is and sticking us with the full bill whether we like it or not! That is not transparent government and it is not fair to taxpayers who live in houses rather than investment vehicles! Please support HB 3899, a bill based on good governance, transparency and fairness to the voter!

Shelby Kaufman

Self, Educator

Austin, TX

I support HB3899.

Voter approval is vital before new debt can be issued! Fiscal transparency is a cornerstone of our democracy. Taxation without representation, even if feasible through state loopholes, must be vehemently opposed

Laura Templeton

Self

Austin, TX

Please support HB 3899. The ATP and the City of Austin should NOT BE ALLOWED A BLANK CHECK for a concept that will not do much for easing traffic congestion, will displace homeowners and will kill businesses. In 2020 Austin voters approved a tax increase for Project Connect that they thought would be their full contribution. The ATP and City should stay within the budget Austin voters approved. The most recent plan for Project Connect will bankrupt the City, increase property taxes and will NOT EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION. SUPPORT HB 3899.

Thank you. Laura Templeton

Stephanie Messerli

Self

Austin, TX

As a resident of Austin, I completely object to the waste of taxpayer time and money to revise an issue that has already been voted on by the residents. Voters approved the Project Connect project in 2020 for ATP (as a Local Government Corporation). I know there are concerns on rising costs, but the rise of costs in this plan is no different than the rise of costs we have seen across the board on all aspects of goods and services. ATP is proposing a phased approach to achieve the plan that was approved by voters. Going in a different direction now would be a massive delay to improvements that are going to take years to implement as is.

Richard N. Maier

Self

Austin,, TX

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

My name is Richard Maier, I am a retired homeowner in Austin – I moved here in 1983, and I support this bill.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address you. In the interest of time, I would like to read my statement.

Let me first say I am a supporter of public transit. I grew up in the Midwest and for a while lived upstairs of my grandfather's barber shop which was on the trolley line.

The groups that pushed for the Project Connect program misrepresented the following:

- (1) the amount of property taxes that we would pay – they only presented an average and did not discuss the highs, the lows and how much the dollar amount of tax will increase in the years to come,
- (2) the uncertainty in the overall cost of the project,
- (3) the potential that the costs and timing could change, and
- (4) the uncertainty in the scope of the project.

We property owners have already been paying the increased property tax **EVEN THOUGH** we have **NO** idea when we will be able to use this system.

I would like to provide an analogy:

In January, a contractor needs a bigger pickup truck because his business **IS** successful in our Great State of Opportunity. The contractor visits the local Ford dealership to purchase an F-350. (That's the heavy-duty version.)

He is told that there are none in stock. The truck will take about 60-days to build so he needs to order one. To **ASSURE** he will get the model he wants and **ON TIME**, he needs to start paying monthly deposits. The contractor agrees.

**ELEVEN MONTHS** later the dealer calls him with good news – The truck has arrived!

The contractor goes to pick up the truck and the dealer shows him his new F-150, **NOT** the F-350 he ordered. The contractor suggests that perhaps the transaction was misrepresented.

Do we think the contractor should have a right to get his money refunded and cancel the purchase?

That's what we taxpayers want to do here. Except we are dealing with **SOME AMORPHOS QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY CALLED THE AUSTIN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP THAT WE DID NOT ELECT** - that misrepresented, not a vehicle dealer.

Let's pass this bill. Thank **YOU**.

Chris Riley

self

Austin, TX

Please **OPPOSE** HB 3899. I am a native Austinite, and I don't have a car; I rely on a bike and transit to get around. We've needed light rail in Austin for a long time, and Austin voters have already approved a plan to get a system in place, knowing full well that this would require the issuance of debt. There is no sound reason to require another election for this.

Tom LeBeau

Self

FORT WORTH, TX

The limiting LGC effectiveness statewide and causing uncertainty with LGC project sponsors and other funding partners is detrimental to the furthering transportation initiatives being implemented. The funding in initiative already approved by the voters for Austin as an example creates and added tool in the toolbox for transit statewide, the approval of HB 3899 goes out of the way to prohibit the use of this type of funding tool, when voters have already approved it.

Zenobia C. Joseph, Title VI Advocate

Self

Austin, TX

“It’s possible to go into court [on Prop A/rail] ballot language. . . . There’s gonna be somebody who says, ‘Hey! Wait a second. I only supported this or voted for this because of the representation . . .that you gave to me.’” ~Then-ATP Vice Chair/lawyer Steve Adler (October 20, 2021)

1. Position: FOR HB 3899, “Relating to the issuance of bonds by certain local government corporations.” December 17, 2020 Austin City Council/ Capital Metro formed Austin Transit Partnership (“ATP”) which was “rushed, opaque and lacked public input.”

2. Statutory Authority: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) “is a Federal statute and provides that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (FTA C 4702.1B, 2012, Ch. I-7).

a. Discrimination: The 2014 Project Connect North Corridor Locally-Preferred Alternative Study showed growth through 2035, yet there is no bus on the FM 734/Parmer billion-dollar corridor, Samsung to Apple. Instead, Austin City Council (“Council”)/ Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority unilaterally reduced Northeast service, forcing Blacks to wait 60 minutes—10 times longer than South/West/Central Austin whites since June 3, 2018. Cap Remap undergirds \$7.1B Project Connect (now, \$10.3B+) with eliminated northeast-west connectivity—no rail 24-30 years.

b. Legislative History: June 28, 2021 I thanked Republican senators for killing HB 3893 (Downtown tunnel bill) after I explained Title VI non-compliance—authored by Rep. Gina Hinojosa. Item I. Public Comment (5:30): <https://austintx.new.swagit.com/videos/123554>

3. Precedent: “Hass, 216 U.S. at 479-480. In *Hammerschmidt*, Chief Justice Taft, defined ‘defraud’” (USDOJ, 2021), in part, “To conspire to defraud the United States means primarily to cheat the Government out of property or money, but it also means to interfere with or obstruct one of its lawful governmental functions by deceit, craft or trickery, or at least by means that are dishonest.”

a. Deceit: September 21, 2020 KVUE reported, “[I]n the months leading up to the vote, there was confusion about what exactly taxpayers would be paying for and what the initial investment would yield.”

b. HB 3899 Support: August 7, 2020 Unlike Wednesday/Noon deadline, Council changed speaker registration to 72 hours after Capital Metro’s Joint Meeting with no discourse. August 12, 2020 Tax Rate permanent increase. Adler said, “All of these speakers, by the way, today, will have one minute to speak.” Publicly-funded equity propaganda tricked voters November 3, 2020. Thus, it’s time to derail Project Connect and permit voters to decide before ATP may issue “bonds to be paid wholly or partly from ad valorem taxes” for light rail. Therefore, I support “voters of the municipality,” including renters and homeowners. Thanks. ~zcj

David Starry

Self, Realtor

Austin, TX

Honorable Members of the House,

I am in full support of HB 3899. I have read the details, and understand the legal, practical and financial considerations. I also followed the marketing campaign for Project Connect in horror.

Based on Capital Metro’s history, and the primary donors to the campaign, I knew that Project Connect would quickly devolve into cost increases and failure to deliver promises.

The voters were duped, and our citizens need some protection going forward. Your consideration and support of HB 3899 is appreciated.

David Starry

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Hearing Date: April 5, 2023 8:00 AM

Bradley Parsons

Self

Austin, TX

I am in favor of HB 3899! Voters should get to vote on new bonds. You don't want this to happen (debts issued without a vote) in other TX cities beyond Austin.

AUSTIN VOTERS WERE LED TO BELIEVE THE TAX INCREASE AND FEDERAL GRANTS, WOULD FUND PROJECT CONNECT; ADDITIONAL PUBLIC DEBT WAS NEVER DELIBERATED OR CONVEYED TO VOTERS. STATEMENTS IN THE PRESS, REINFORCED THE “NO BOND” NARRATIVE.

The Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) already has three funding sources:

- 1) an \$0.0875/\$100 property tax levied by the City of Austin
- 2) Capital Metro who collects a \$0.01 sales tax dedicated for public transit and
- 3) Federal and State grants, which they claim will pay 45% or more of the cost

Voters were misled into the belief there were no bonds involved and the 2020 Project Connect tax increase and federal grants fully funded the transit system. Local news media drove this into the public consciousness (see attachments). There was little to no public dialog regarding bond debt. Voters cannot approve what they are not aware of.

ATP should operate with the revenue voters approved. Borrowing costs have skyrocketed since the election. Voters must approve future borrowing.

**PROJECT CONNECT 2020 vs 2023: A RECORD-HISTORIC “BAIT AND SWITCH”**

The “transit plan for Austin” promoted in 2020, is radically different from what is now proposed. They are not delivering what we voted on.

An intensive, multi-year, taxpayer funded marketing campaign, misled voters with false renderings/images and maps. This marketing went beyond “public information”. Local officials charged with oversight, failed to ask critical questions about the funding or lack of engineering. Unsupported, specious claims of traffic congestion and climate change relief, a cornerstone of the marketing, was even on the ballot! Austin voters were deceived.

**NO “BLANK CHECKS”, THE STATE MUST REQUIRE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND VOTER APPROVAL FOR ANY FUTURE DEBT OBLIGATION.** The ATP must comply with the funding voters were told paid for the project and not have bonding ability; this legislation is a compromise. It empowers voters with a voice in the debt they are obligated to repay. Voters didn't approve a “blank check” in 2020 and most believed the record-historic tax increase was their full contribution. As Austin's mayor recently stated: “The voters gave approval in a ‘within your means kind of budget.’”

Let's turn this bill into law!

Joseph Reynolds  
Self, Retired Researcher  
Austin, TX  
HB3899 – Favor

Chair and Members,

I support this bill. It will ensure citizen oversight of community projects that deviate from the initial, voter approved, goals and qualities, and become very different as designs change.

It's not unusual for a grand goal to be set that is widely approved by voters, but then the means of achieving it become impossible, or extremely expensive to achieve, as details of implementation become evident.

This bill would provide for further measure of voter approval by ensuring that citizens are allowed to approve/reject the payment of the changed project.

Big projects, water plans, transportation, etc. require extensive engineering to be accomplished. Some engineering must be done to develop the concept, but that is necessarily limited in scope as there is no capital fund to do accurate work – just concept. With an initial approval, real work can be done by using initial funds approved. But it is common that the further engineering work shows the initial concept isn't feasible in scope or for the cost. It's a common business situation. In business the shareholders get to decide whether to proceed, or stop and cut the losses. For public projects, the voters should make the decision.

This bill accomplishes voter control of complex projects at the correct level; those who would pay, decide.

Thank You.

Joe Reynolds -- Austin Voter

Ronnie Klatt  
myself  
Austin, TX

Austin Voters were sold a bag of lies. We were scammed by the Liberal city council of Austin. Please help us stop this waste and fraud. we were lied to by those that benefit from this project connect. stop this crap and please support HB 3899

Leonard Wilson  
Self retired  
Austin, TX

Please protect the taxpayers of Austin from the crushing burden of debt that will be the result of the continuation of Project Connect. Voters were misled by the city, staff, and city Council by their gross understatement of the cost to construct the light rail system.

Elena Goyanes  
Self  
Austin, TX

I fully support this bill. History and the experiences of other U.S. cities show that light rail, etc. proposals ALWAYS cost more than originally proposed, leaving taxpayers holding an ever larger tax bill -- ALWAYS without their support.

Kristi McKenzie

self

Austin, TX

Please support HB 3899 in the interests of current and future taxpayers. The city of Austin consistently offers bonds to continue to bloat an already robust budget. When Project Connect passed in 2020 I felt it was missing some key information, namely how it would be entirely funded with what they were proposing. The media sold the city on the need for improved mass transit without providing any balanced information regarding the cost. It was pretty clear the local media was on a campaign. As we now know, the cost has greatly surpassed what was advertised and there is no accountability in keeping that cost to the original bond. This house bill is vital in holding our elected politicians to honestly acknowledge the cost of what they are proposing. There is an affordability crisis in Austin and no one wants to address the elephant in the room, the driver of affordability, and that is pet projects this city wants to push through without the disadvantage of fiscal honesty. This bill does not take away local control, it does not allow Austin leaders to continue their push for pet projects. This bill requires honesty, which we should all strive for and expect in our leaders.

Marguerite Kreisle-Brady, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

I support the Project Connect "No Blank Checks" bill (HB 3899)

Mike OBrien

self - retired

Austin, TX

I am in support of this bill, especially as it pertains to the transit plan for Austin promoted in 2020. The current plan is quite different from the 2020 plan and Austin citizens should not be obligated to pay for it with new taxes or bond obligations.

Jeannette Dianovich

self, state worker

Austin, TX

As a Native Austinite of 44 years, I am 100% in support of The Project Connect "No Blank Checks" bill (HB 3899). Project Connect 2020 vs 2023: A record-historic "bait and switch". The "transit plan for Austin" that was a multi-year, heavily promoted and intensely marketed in 2020, is radically different from what is now proposed. Voters were misled with false renderings/images and maps. This marketing campaign went beyond "public information". Local officials charged with oversight, failed to ask critical questions about the funding or lack of engineering. Unsupported, specious claims of traffic congestion and climate change relief, a cornerstone of the marketing, was even on the ballot! Austin voters were deceived! They are not delivering what we voted on, and for the record, I voted against all of those hidden tax-increase bonds! It is clearly a train boondoggle. The Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) already has three (3) funding sources; Voters were misled into believing there were no bonds involved and the 2020 Project Connect tax increase and federal grants fully funded the transit system. There was little to no dialogue regarding the bond debt; ATP must be held to operate only with the revenue voters approved. Borrowing costs have skyrocketed since the election. It is necessary for us voters to approve any and all future borrowing! "No Blank Checks" - the State must require fiscal transparency and voter approval for any future debt obligation. The ATP must comply with the funding voters were told paid for the project and not have bonding ability; this legislation is a compromise. It empowers voters with a voice in the debt they are obligated to repay. Voters didn't approve a "blank check" in 2020 and most believed the record-historic tax increase was their full contribution. As Austin's mayor recently stated, "The voters gave approval in a 'within your means kind of budget."

Elizabeth Dianovich

self, retired

Austin, TX

As an active Austin voter over several years, I am 100% in support of The Project Connect "No Blank Checks" bill (HB 3899). Project Connect 2020 vs 2023: A record-historic "bait and switch". The "transit plan for Austin" that was a multi-year, heavily promoted and intensely marketed campaign in 2020, is radically different from what is now proposed. Voters were misled with false renderings/images and maps. This marketing campaign went beyond "public information". Local officials charged with oversight, failed to ask critical questions about the funding or lack of engineering. Unsupported, specious claims of traffic congestion and climate change relief, a cornerstone of the marketing, was even on the ballot! Austin voters were deceived! They are not delivering what we voted on, and for the record, I voted against all of those hidden tax-increase bonds! It is clearly a train boondoggle. The Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) already has three (3) funding sources; Voters were misled into believing there were no bonds involved and the 2020 Project Connect tax increase and federal grants fully funded the transit system. There was little to no dialogue regarding the bond debt; ATP must be held to operate only with the revenue voters approved. Borrowing costs have skyrocketed since the election. It is necessary for us voters to approve any and all future borrowing! "No Blank Checks" - the State must require fiscal transparency and voter approval for any future debt obligation. The ATP must comply with the funding voters were told paid for the project and not have bonding ability; this legislation is a compromise. It empowers voters with a voice in the debt they are obligated to repay. Voters didn't approve a "blank check" in 2020 and most believed the record-historic tax increase was their full contribution. As Austin's mayor recently stated, "The voters gave approval in a "within your means kind of budget."

Leigh Ann Brunson

Myself

Austin, TX

As a citizen of Austin, Texas, I am increasingly alarmed the way to city of Austin passes bonds and then completely changes what they're going to do. No regard for cost overruns particularly related to Project Connect. There needs to be some limits regarding overruns. The citizens of Austin did not approve. The citizens are against blank checks for the city of Austin.

Ellis Hammonds

Self. Retired

Austin, TX

I support HB 3899. No blank check, voters must decide

Merry Brand

self - retired

Austin, TX

I am in support of HB 3899 because the taxpayers need to be able to give a voice in the debt that we are obligated to pay. We need to be able to approved these increases since we are the ones who pay for it. We have had to many bait & switches in the past. Please pass HB 3899!!

James Lynch

Just myself

Austin, TX

This bill will help give the Austin residents a chance to right a wrong that was perpetrated on them by their inept city council that never made clear what this project would cost and at best just lied to the voters to get their boondoggle passed. So please vote this bill's enforcement to allow us the chance to stop the city council from this wasteful deal.



Terence Kearns, Mr.

self

Austin, TX

I am in support of this bill requiring voter approval before any new municipal debt can be obligated, i. e. for the City of Austin to issue any more bonds to fund Project Connect. The more transparency, the better. We have been sold a bill of goods. This is a giant boondoggle.

James O'Leary

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Committee Members,

I wholeheartedly support this bill which would clarify and curtail the language of the Texas Government Code insofar as the ability of any Local Government Corporation to issue or incur debt without specific approval of the citizens of the affected city or county.

I am greatly concerned that the newly established Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) may assess, due to ambiguity in current law, that it now has the unfettered ability to issue debt, which would be incurred by the Austin taxpayers, relative to Austin's Project Connect, without ANY future approval by the taxpayers. Moving forward, without sufficient clarification in current law would be tantamount to giving ATP a blank check, which I doubt Austinites had in mind when they approved the original proposition.

I voted against this "plan" as originally "sold" to Austinites since it has never been a well thought out design and has been modified many times since its original conception.....The "plan" lacks sufficient engineering studies to say the very least; nor has the full costs of the current design (subject to be modified yet again) been fully detailed for public review. As an architectural engineer, I would never begin a project of such enormous scale without first having more fully examined the liabilities of moving forward with such limited engineering studies.

Sincerely,

JF O'Leary

karen pope, PhD

Self, retired educator

Austin, TX

I am in support of the bill requiring voter approval before any new debt can be issued for this huge, complicated project. Reasoning shared by Jennifer Virden is compelling to me. Thank you.

Stephen Davis

SELF - RETIRED BUILDER

Austin, TX

I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN AUSTIN, 73 YEARS OLD NOW. THE CITY GOVERNMENT IS TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL. PROJECT CONNECT IS A PRIME EXAMPLE. PLEASE HELP THE VOTERS IN AUSTIN GET THE TRUTH, AND NOT SOME BAIT & SWITCH. PERSONALLY, I WOULD RATHER SEE THE WHOLE THING PUT ON HOLD UNTIL OUR POLICE ARE PROPERLY STAFFED AND FUNDED. I BELIEVE PROJECT CONNECT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR PHOTO OP FOR A FAILED CITY COUNSEL TO BOAST ABOUT.

Brad Suessmith

Self - Field Sales Engineer

Austin, TX

The state of Texas must require fiscal transparency and voter approval for any future debt obligations.

Michelle Kinkade

self

Austin, TX

Votes are cast based on information provided. When a project is fundamentally changed after voter approval, they should be required to put it on another ballot. The transit project, Project Connect, was presented as a full plan with design and financing. Everything has since changed. The authority to change the financing or fundamentally change the design should nullify the vote. It cannot be legal for the city to bait and switch the voters.

Gene Dooley

Self

Austin, TX

Bill needs to be passed requiring taxpayer approval of expenditures

Annie Dooley

Self

Austin, TX

I support this bill, requiring taxpayer approval of large expenditures.

Eric Heins

self

Austin, TX

Please support HB 3899 to keep Texas projects accountable for debt issuance, by requiring voters explicitly approve bond issuance for municipalities.

Cathey Reynolds

self

Austin, TX

I support HB 3899, no blank checks concerning Project Connect; We, as the Austin voters, should have a voice in how much money we are willing to pay for a project that has become way too costly for what little return it will give us. We have more pressing issues to spend the taxpayers money on, such as funding police department, drug and alcohol rehab services for people on the streets, and lowering property taxes.

Mike Spindler

private citizen, retired

Austin, TX

Strong support of this bill. Giving Austin unfettered access to unsupervised/unapproved spending is akin to giving a drug addict the keys to the pharmacy. Citizens have a right to know how tax dollars are spent, especially future tax revenues. This new approach to funding looks alot like the wimpy method (see popeye cartoons).

Debra Libert

None

AUSTIN, TX

PROJECT CONNECT: This is a clear case of misrepresentation once again by our City leaders. Austin voters were led to believe that the tax increase and federal grants would fund project connect. Additional public debt was never conveyed or approved by voters. City Council and the past Mayor historically use confusing language as well on the ballots to push their agendas through and mislead the voters. Project Connect is a perfect example of this 'bait and switch' mentality as the 2023 proposal is radically different than what the majority of voters approved back in 2020. **THE STATE MUST REQUIRE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY, STRAIGHT LANGUAGE AND VOTER APPROVAL FOR ANY FUTURE DEBT OBLIGATION.** I am sincerely hopeful that Mayor Watson can reign in the current City Council members and revive the great city of Austin. The passage of this Bill is a step in the right direction. Thank you!

Elloa Mathews

self-retired

Austin, TX

I support HB 3899 because the election to pay for light rail should have not been held during the pandemic when many elderly voters were not vaccinated and afraid to vote in person. This was a tax increase election that was not accessible to elderly voters for whom the tax increase is most impactful.

While attending UT in the late 1970's-early 1980's, I took advantage of the campus rapid bus system. It worked great and I was able to walk from my parent's house to the UT bus stop as well as take a bus anywhere on campus and not wait more than five minutes.

The city doesn't need expensive fixed rail. We need to let UT run regional rapid bus systems in the city the way that they do on UT campus. This will solve the funding problem and stop ATP and CapMetro from making Austin more unaffordable.

Elizabeth Castiglioni

myself

Austin, TX

Austin voters were lead to believe the tax increase and federal grants would fund project connect. Additional public debt was never mentioned or voters were not given a chance. ATP should operate with the revenue the voters approved. The messaging was misleading. The City has an obligation to deliver what the voters voted on. They have to accurately represent their projects. I do not support writing a blank check for this project. Thank you for your consideration.

Debra Fincher

Self - business manager

Austin, TX

I support this bill. Taxpayers/voters need to be informed honestly of how new debt is to be repaid when issuing bonds or proposing new projects. Voters were led to believe that the Project Connect transportation plan would cost \$7.1 billion and that the tax increase along with federal grants would fund it. Additional public debt was never conveyed to the voters. And now the transit plan is very different that the one proposed in the 2020 election. It is a huge mess and we are sick of seeing our tax dollars wasted! This city management needs a full scale audit with accountability required after the report. At the very least, a citywide election should be held before borrowing more money that the \$7.1B that voters approved.

Rick Wells  
self retired  
Austin, TX

I support HB 3899 now, more than ever. In the aftermath of the most recent banking collapses, voters MUST have a say in how money is borrowed, managed and utilized by our Public Servants. We MUST be provided honest and accurate information that promotes understanding of what is needed and how it will be used, and certainly not a blank check endorsed with the taxpayer's signature.

Rick Wells.

Allison Jackson  
Self  
Austin, TX

The transit plan for Austin promoted in 2020, is drastically different from what is now proposed. This bill empowers voters with a voice in their debt obligations and prevents uncontrollable spending by city governments. I strongly support this bill.

Kelley Wallace  
Self  
Austin, TX

I support HB3899 for the following reasons. For all local governments in Texas, unconstrained budgetary processes are burdening Texas tax-payers with debt and projects that they did not sign up for. As an example, Project Connect is running over budget by at least 40% for \$5.6billion to \$10.3billion. Local Government Corporations (LGC) created under Ch 431 of the Transportation Code, like ATP are not being held to the same standards of the Texas Government Code 1251. The reason why this should be a statewide issue is because if this funding scheme is allowed to proceed in Austin, it can and will be used by others in Texas. The State must require fiscal transparency and voter approval for any future dept obligation.

Brad Parsons  
Self  
Austin, TX

I am an Austin voter and in full support of HB 3899. Austin voters should be able to vote each time ATP seeks to issue new debt to build out Project Connect as it is expected to be a multi-BILLION dollar project. The taxes are already too high on this. To be frank, the voters were sold a line of bull when the Project Connect tax was put on the ballot, all the more reason why we should be able to vote each time debt is sought on the project. What we voted on before were bogus numbers and made no mention of the additional need for debt in addition to the dramatic tax increase. Thanks Rep. Troxclair for introducing this. Lege, please more this bill forward. Brad Parsons

Jeff Pender  
self/retired lawyer/geophysicist  
Austin, TX

I am in full support of this measure. No city in Texas should be allowed to pull the wool over the eyes of its voters as the City of Austin is doing with its Project Connect.

Dianne Field, Mrs.  
Self / Real Estate Agent  
Austin, TX

Project Connect has been a record-historic "bait & switch" from its inception. The "transit plan for Austin" promoted in 2020 is significantly different from what is now proposed. The intensive, multi-year, taxpayer funded marketing campaign misled voters with false renderings/images and maps. This marketing went beyond "public information". Local officials charged with oversight, failed to ask critical questions about the funding or lack of engineering. Unsupported claims of traffic congestion and climate change relief, a cornerstone of the marketing, was even on the ballot! AUSTIN VOTERS WERE DECEIVED!

i support the "No Blank Checks" HB 3899 because, as an Austin taxpayer since 1981, I believe any new debt must require voter approval. Homeowners and renters alike are already suffering under high property taxes and a lack of affordable housing; we do not need the additional burden of even more financing for a project which has been mismanaged for 3 years. Even Mayor Watson has stated that "Project Connect is a mess".

My personal recommendation would be to replace all the empty city busses with smaller busses/vans (like the Metro Access vans) and increase the routes, particularly easy of IH-35. All I see are big, mostly empty busses driving around. And skip the EV ones, too, until we have a reliable power grid. Just keep it simple and provide good, dependable public transportation for the citizens of Austin - not some huge boondoggle project that will cost EVERYONE alot more money.

Thank you.

Linda Durnin, Ms  
self  
Austin, TX

I support HB 3899-NO "BLANK CHECKS", THE STATE MUST REQUIRE FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND VOTER APPROVAL FOR ANY FUTURE DEBT OBLIGATION. The ATP must comply with the funding voters were told paid for the project and not have bonding ability; this legislation is a compromise. It empowers voters with a voice in the debt they are obligated to repay. Voters didn't approve a "blank check" in 2020 and most believed the record-historic tax increase was their full contribution. As Austin's mayor recently stated: "The voters gave approval in a within your means kind of budget." This project will damage the environment and tear up the city worse than it already is torn up. This project had no oversight or feasibility studies. Austin was sold a bill of goods! Support this BILL!

Cynthia Saye, Mrs.  
Self, Technology Support  
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I fully support this bill. There were signs from before Project Connect was approved that what was being presented was irresponsible and couldn't possibly be accurate, but the city pushed this through deceptively and dishonestly. Simple things like a geographic survey were bypassed to ram this project through. Meanwhile other more basic needs are ignored by the city. For example, the bus route at my last residence in Austin meant that a 10-15 minute car drive to the grocery store would be 1-1.5 hours by bus. I work in Downtown Austin and don't even have safely maintained sidewalks around my office - they have sudden drops, bumps, and many sections where you must step into the busy 4 lane street due to poles in the middle of the sidewalk that prevent passing. A coworker was injured significantly due to a fall on these sidewalks from the hazards. Yet the city pushes projects through like Project Connect (or the spectacular financial failures of the city website redesign or the homeless hotels) that are certainly benefitting someone higher up while punishing the actual tax paying residents who end up paying excessively for projects they'll never get to use. Let's do something about it.