

Do We Have An Alternative?

There are three basic components to this \$7.0 billion dollar Transit Proposal:

1) \$341,500,000 for 3 MetroExpress bus routes, 9 new park & rides, 15 new neighborhood circulator zones, 4 new RapidBus routes, maintenance facilities, technology, and increases to the capacity of the MetroBus vehicles currently serving numerous routes.

2) \$375,000,000 for improvements to the Red Line Commuter Rail service and a new Green Line Commuter Rail service from the City of Manor to Downtown Austin.

3) \$6,220,000,000 to increase the capacity of the MetroRapid buses serving the Route 801 corridor --and-- increasing the capacity of the MetroBus vehicles serving the southern portion of Route 20 that runs from Downtown Austin out to the ABIA airport.

The reason why the third component above costs so much is because the City of Austin has decided to increase the capacity of the existing MetroRapid and MetroBus vehicles serving both Route 801 and the southern portion of Route 20 using Light Rail vehicles instead of larger RapidBuses even though larger buses have two to three times the capacity of the existing MetroRapid and MetroBus vehicles.

Using Light Rail vehicles instead of larger RapidBus vehicles not only increases the cost of the vehicles, but it requires moving all of the underground utilities out of the street along the service corridors which costs approximately \$100,000,000 per mile.

Do We Have An Alternative?

The City of Austin will tell you that larger RapidBuses cannot handle the projected ridership demand of 2040 and, so, that's why they need Light Rail vehicles. Well, their ridership projects for The Red Line Commuter Rail and RapidBus have yet to be achieved. The point is: it's easier to sell a Transit Project to the voters with high projected ridership numbers than it is otherwise. And projected ridership on The Orange Line at 570% of what the ridership is along that corridor today may be serving the same purpose.

The City of Austin tells us our population will double by 2040. That's a twenty year period. To do that, Austin will need to grow at an annual rate of 3.6% which is what Austin has been doing for some time. However, what the City of Austin is projecting as to the growth in ridership of The Orange Line ridership over that same period is at an annual rate of 10.2%. As you can see, the two numbers don't reconcile.

It's the oldest trick in the book that politicians use all the time. Create the illusion of a crisis and then suggest a solution to the crisis that gets them what they want. Here they tell us we must have Light Rail because the ridership in 2040 is just going to be too much for RapidBuses to handle when the only data supporting that argument is a false ridership projection. How do we know that? Simple. **If the population of Austin is projected to increase 100% by 2040, then the ridership along The Orange Line corridor is NOT going to increase 570%. But, yet, that's what the City of Austin wants us to believe.**

Do We Have An Alternative?

What the City of Austin doesn't want us to know is that larger RapidBuses would easily handle the projected increase in ridership for years to come. Meanwhile, Austin commuters must continue to use the highways that, today and each and every day, force suburbanites to deal with God awful congestion without any realistic plan to alleviate that congestion.

Thus, **this is but one alternative: Vote NO** for this Light Rail Plan and send a clear message to the powers that be that this Light Rail Plan represents the wrong approach to improving Mobility because it's not focused on the greatest need...the congestion on our highways. Force the City of Austin to use larger RapidBuses on both the Orange and Blue Lines and eliminate the subway, the underground retail plaza and the new rail bridge over Town Lake. Then: use the approx. \$5.76 billion dollars saved to provide the suburbs with more Commuter Rail. And, finally, by Voting NO, you send a clear message that Neighborhoods like Southeast Austin should not be ignored in any future Transit Proposal.

And **Commuter Rail can also serve many of the neighborhoods in the Urban Core**. As an example, Commuter Rail down the center of IH-35 south of Town Lake would serve many of the neighborhoods in the southeast portion of Austin. It would also serve many of the neighborhoods in the eastern section of the south central portion of Austin. The same would be true of Commuter Rail down the center of IH-35 north of Town Lake. And that reality would also be true of Commuter Rail on Mopac and U.S. Hwy 183 north.

Do We Have An Alternative?

So, as you consider how you intend to vote on this Light Rail Plan, ask yourself one of the following two questions:

Renters - When was the last you spent \$370* and received nothing in return and did that same thing year after year?

Home Owners - When was the last time you spent \$480* and got nothing in return and did that same thing year after year?

The answer to those two questions, depending upon your situation, is the essence of what your decision regarding this Light Rail Plan is all about.

Why? Because the **only alternative** to spending money and getting nothing in return for that money **is to say “no”, I will not do that to myself.**

A “no” vote doesn’t stop the Commuter Rail Service or the Bus Service portions of this Transit Proposal because those portions can be accomplished without a tax increase.

By **“voting no”** you send a clear message to the City of Austin that they can and must do better to improve Mobility for all of its citizens and not just a few of the privileged.

*8 year average of annual increases in taxes

Do We Have An Alternative?

IN SUMMARY: The City of Austin wants the voters to **raise** their **property tax rate 25% to do the following:**

- 1) replace the Rapid & Metro buses serving Route 801 and that portion of Route 20 running to the ABIA with Light Rail vehicles instead of larger buses that would save \$5.76 billion dollars;
- 2) provide windfall profits for and further enrich the Downtown Developers, Rainey Street Neighborhood High Rent Developers, and the East Riverside Drive High Rent Developers;
- 3) to permanently remove one lane of traffic in each direction from the major roadways of North Lamar Blvd, Guadalupe Street, Riverside Drive, South Congress Avenue and the South First Street Bridge;
- 4) to deny the Southeast Austin Neighborhoods access to Light Rail; and,
- 5) to continue to **IGNOR** the God awful traffic congestion on Mopac Blvd, U.S. Hwy 183, Ben White Blvd, Hwy 360, IH-35, etc.

Do We Have An Alternative?

VERY IMPORTANT!!!!

On November 3rd, you will see two items on the Ballot with regard to this Light Rail Plan and the associated Tax Rate Increase:

1) a Proposition asking permission to raise the tax rate 25% with language that will contain, at a minimum, these three lines.....

PROPOSED TAX RATE	\$0.5335 per \$100
NO-NEW-REVENUE TAX RATE	\$0.4284 per \$100
VOTER-APPROVAL TAX RATE	\$0.4460 per \$100

2) a Proposition asking approval to issue \$3.85 billion dollars in bonds to construct the Transit Proposal (the FTA will cover \$3.15 billion of the \$7.0 billion leaving Austin taxpayers to pay for \$3.85 billion which requires the tax rate of \$0.0875 per \$100)

So, where's the **\$0.875 per \$100 tax rate increase for the Light Rail Plan**? The answer can be found by adding \$0.4460 and \$0.0875 together to get **\$0.5335**. You see, the City of Austin cannot legally raised your tax rate above \$0.4460 without your permission. And that rate includes a 3.5% increase in taxes over 2020 which is higher than inflation (i.e. more than enough money to run the City). Thus, **there is NO LEGAL CONNECTION BETWEEN increasing your tax rate and building out the Light Rail Plan.**

Do We Have An Alternative?

Therefore, **there is one last possibility to consider.** The City of Austin has predicated this request to raise your property tax rate by 25% on the assertion that they will take on \$7.0 billion dollars of debt to build out this Transit Proposal.

But, **NOTHING REQUIRES The City of Austin to deliver on that representation!!** In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 2 (SB2) in order to slow down the increases in annual property taxes. Prior to 2019, if a City approved a tax rate higher than Texas law allowed (8%), taxpayers had to gather signatures to force a vote to either “rollback” the increased tax rate or approve it. SB2 changed that dynamic in two ways: 1) the “cap” or “threshold” went from 8% to 3.5%; and, 2) the City is now required to ask permission from the taxpayers before raising the tax rate above the 3.5% threshold.

As you can imagine, the City of Austin wasn't happy about having funds cut off that they like to spend on **budgetary items that are not required to run the City.** So, when SB2 was passed by the Texas Legislature the City of Austin came up with, at first, a \$10.0 billion dollars Transit Proposal that they had to cut down, for now, to \$7.0 billion dollars in order to be “sensitive” to those losing their jobs, their homes and their livelihoods. How big of them!! With the current state of affairs, this is **NOT THE TIME for this tax rate increase!!**

But the biggest question is: what are they going to do with the surplus tax money each year? Yes, after 7 years the City of Austin doesn't need this 25% tax rate increase!!

Do We Have An Alternative?

SURPLUS??!! Yes. If voters approve this 25% tax rate increase, **by 2040**, the City of Austin will have accumulated approximately **\$2 billion dollars more than they need** to pay the debt on the \$7.0 billion dollars in bond debt to fund this Transit Proposal. **Money the City of Austin doesn't need to run the City or pay its debts.**

REMEMBER: If the City of Austin would simply replace the MetroRapid and MetroBus vehicles currently serving Route 801 and the southern portion of Route 20 with larger buses, **THIS 25% TAX INCREASE WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY!!!!**

One thing is for sure. We don't yet know if this Covid-19 is here to stay. And because of that we don't know how much of today's teleworking in response to the virus will become permanent. **Why is that important?** Because if much of the teleworking of today does become permanent, then public transit ridership will be far less than what the City of Austin anticipates and, thus, 82% or \$5.76 billion dollars of this \$7.0 billion dollar Transit Proposal may not be needed.

The FINAL ALTERNATIVE

Accordingly, the City of Austin has no business bringing this 25% tax rate increase to the voters this November 3rd and should, instead, **wait until next year to see what life looks like then.** To do otherwise would be irresponsible. **So by voting "NO" on both the 25% Tax Rate Increase and the \$7.0 billion dollar Transit Proposal, you can force the City of Austin to wait until next year to see if this Light Rail Plan is necessary.**