

## Late Backup

My name is Michael Elder. I am a computer professional, a former cab driver and a current user of public transportation, both buses and taxis.

I love Austin and I agree that Austin's current public transportation needs improvement. I've been aware of the problem for 30 years and I'm glad the city council is finally recognizing it. But with all due respect, a large part of the problem has been created and sustained by the Austin City Council, both past and present.

The 2 largest components of public transportation are buses and cabs. With regard to those, this city has a very poor track record. One does not have to look very far back for examples.

The Capital Metro Bus system is barely adequate for those who use it within the city on a regular basis. The most recent changes that brought the new articulating buses online also resulted in an overall degradation of customer service and rider inconvenience.

The problems with the city's taxi-cab service only happens because the City of Austin allows it. With the current design, the cab companies are not in the transportation business, but rather the car leasing business. Cab drivers want to provide good customer service, but they are a captive audience with no power to hold the cab companies accountable for mistakes that waste time and gas. The city does not hold the cab companies accountable and the drivers cannot.

Regarding other pilot programs:

The most recent pilot program related to public transportation was a 6 month program to test the use of electric golf cart cabs. The program was not operated according to its design, but it was implemented anyway without further review.

On the other side, a request by the Taxicab Drivers Association of Austin for a pilot program to allow drivers to lease cab permits directly from the city has been denied repeatedly. This would allow drivers to hold the cab companies accountable for bad dispatch service and in turn, force the cab companies to improve service.

With regards to the current proposal before the council regarding TNC's, I do not see it as beneficial to Austin overall. TNC's will only service those with a credit card and a smart phone. TNC's will not provide service in lower income areas, for many disabled and wheel chair bound customers, nor for those who make short routine trips, (for example, from the grocery store). TNC's will not service those customers, but they have the potential to devastate the ranks of cab drivers that do by usurping enough prime business to squeeze them out of the market.

With all due respect, why are you proposing a pilot to allow TNC's to operate, but not allowing a pilot for cab drivers to lease permits directly from the city? As it occurs to me, the priority should be to clean up our current public transportation problems before adding new components into the mix. The latter would be a step in the right direction as it has potential to improve the cab service already here.

It should also be noted that city council currently has a working committee looking at how and where TNC's could fit into Austin public transportation. A report with the committee's recommendations is due by early summer. As summer is typically a slow season for public transportation in Austin, there is no urgent need to pass this measure before the committee has concluded it's work.

[My personal view is that if there is to be a pilot program allowing TNC's to operate, the first logical step should be to require TNC's to work with the licensed cab drivers already here. Cab drivers could be allowed to register with only one TNC each and would not be allowed to stack trips between cab company dispatch and the TNC. Cab companies would be required to allow this.]

[Potentially, a pilot program of this design could determine if the root cause of the problem is due to an insufficient number of cabs, or by cab company dispatch service. Only after that pilot has concluded should a pilot program to allow TNC's to work with non-commercial vehicle drivers be considered and then, only if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the greater community at large.]

In any event, should TNC's be allowed to operate in Austin, those companies and the drivers who work with them should be required to obey all vehicle for hire regulations. For Austin to allow TNC's to operate within the city and without regard to the current vehicle for hire regulations would be irresponsible.

Those are my arguments against the pilot program resolution and I thank you for your time.