

Begin forwarded message:

Begin forwarded message:

From: Samuel Franco

Date: October 21, 2021 at 2:43:05 PM CDT

To: Jocelyn.Vokes@atptx.org, "Nirenberg, Jackie" <Jackie.Nirenberg@capmetro.org>

Cc: info@austintransitpartnership.org, bc-mario.champion@austintexas.gov

Subject: Additional comments on new Blue Line Light Rail Bridge Design

Austin Transit Partnership Staff,

My name is Samuel Franco, and I am a resident of Austin City Council - District 3. I hold both a BS and MS in Civil Engineering and have been an infrastructure professional for more than a decade. I strive to make my community a better place in my free time by staying active in local politics and community issues. I serve as the Chair of the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board and sit on both the Design Commission and Urban Transportation Commission for the City of Austin.

Thank you very much for the excellent discussion on Tuesday, October 12 at the "*Community Design Workshop : Lady Bird Lake Bridge*" and for the opportunity to provide input into the design for the new transit bridge over our beloved Lady Bird Lake. This email recaps my comments at that public input meeting and further expands on my thoughts.

I believe it is not equitable to build the only new north and south connection in our congestion-laden city, west of the historical divide that is Interstate 35, and only put historically more expensive rail on that bridge. This new connection over the lake, as currently envisioned by Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) staff, would not adequately or equitably serve the northeast, southeast, or southwest Austin residents. With the first two geographic areas mentioned lying within the majority-minority council districts that have been and are still predominantly people of color, I find the lack of bus access over this bridge to be very disheartening. While the light rail, as currently envisioned, will travel quickly across the river on a dedicated bridge, those that can not ride the light rail are relegated to being stuck in Austin's horrific traffic jams to wave at the people in cars alongside them.

Further, in this phase of implementation, the light rail system only has one east and west route. While I am sure it is well-intentioned, this footprint does not serve the majority of the historically underrepresented parts of our city. While the new light rail system goes north to south, for the most part, our east Austin residents are resigned to "expanded" and hopefully better bus connections. It is no secret these underrepresented parts of Austin were implemented by our own city's design under the 1928 Master Plan for Austin, Texas, which forced people of color east. As we reflect on these past design mistakes and embark on a new design for our city's bright future, we mustn't let the design of this new bridge further the oppressive and racist past of our city, so many years removed from that dark time period in Austin.

We are at a crucial point in the design effort to expand our transit system and we may never have the same chance for many years. I want to congratulate the ATP/CapMetro/City of Austin staff on an excellent and expedient job of getting us to 15 percent design, and I know they are working hard to get

us to 30 percent. In my experience as an infrastructure professional, the 30 percent design is an important milestone for federal funding and the NEPA process. The federal government's decisions for the project and funding are based heavily on what the sponsoring entity shows in these submittals.

I respectfully request that our design professionals perform, report on, and include in their RFP for design teams the possibilities of utilizing the new bridge over Lady Bird Lake for the proposed light rail, pedestrians, cyclists, and **buses**. There is precedent for this type of multimodal, shared use of a bridge in Portland, Oregon, where the Tilikum Crossing in that city allows for light rail and buses, pedestrians, and cyclists. Imagine what a bridge like this could do for our city.

Kind regards - and as always, thank you so much for your work for our community!

Respectfully,

Samuel Franco

CC:

Austin Transit Partnership Board

Chair Mario Champion - City of Austin, Urban Transportation Commission