

AUSTIN MONORAIL PROJECT

4901 Whispering Valley Dr., Austin, Texas 78727-6842; 512-345-4732

www.AustinMonorail.org

April 19, 2003

Mr. Austan S. Librach
Director, Transportation & Planning Department
CITY OF AUSTIN
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

Re: Your letter dated April 7, 2003, to Ms. Xxxxxx (copy attached)

Dear Mr. Librach:

We wish to address certain persistent inaccuracies, deceptions and myths concerning Monorail that we find in your letter to Ms. Xxxxxx, which you sent at the request of Hon. Beverly Dunkerly, Austin City Councilperson. We do not know why a professional such as yourself would become a party to the perpetuation of these myths and deceptions, but in an effort to identify them and isolate them, we present the following statements which we ask you to Admit as accurate or Deny as inaccurate, and if denied, kindly state a verifiable source as the basis for such denial.

If you are relying upon documentation from Capital Metro for technical data, we request that you restrict such reliance to data that has been certified by a licensed engineer or certified public accountant to insure accuracy. This great City of Austin is embarking upon the construction of a fixed-rail transit system that the residents of Austin will either be enjoying or frustrated by for the next 100 years. We need to be sure that in 2003 we have done painstaking and *objective* research to insure that our selection is the best possible option available to us in this time in history.

We enclose a diskette on which this letter is copied in Word format to facilitate your response.

Therefore, please Admit or Deny to the following statements, all of which reference your letter, copy attached:

1. Paragraph Two: You state that the purpose is not to create a “quick and great traffic reliever,” but to “encourage more compact and sustainable development over time.”
 - A. Admit or Deny that this has more to do with enforcing someone’s idea of urban planning upon the public than it does with trying to meet transportation needs of the present and future, and is essentially the same as saying that you want to use these streetcars as a further ‘traffic calming’ device.
 - B. Admit or Deny that Light Rail Transit (hereinafter “LRT” or “streetcars”) as you present it here is an attempt to so burden the roads that you discourage people from using their automobiles so they will take the LRT out of desperation. Is this not much like the glass company throwing bricks through windows with notes advertising their services?
 - C. Admit or Deny that this LRT program, as you have outlined it, is actually a method of removing the element of choice from the motoring public through social engineering, rather than an attempt to offer a true mobility solution to the citizens of Austin.
2. Paragraph Three: You admit that Monorail is more traffic friendly. You imply that the Monorail “technology’s overall effectiveness in linking all people, not just the driving population, with their desired destinations,” is not as good as LRT.
 - A. Admit or Deny that this is a specious and insupportable argument.
 - B. Admit or Deny that LRT cannot link all people of Austin because it simply will not handle many (if not most) of Austin’s grades.
 - C. Admit or Deny that Monorail *can* handle all grades present in Austin’s hills due to its superior rubber on concrete technology and due to its ability to create its own grade by adjusting the heights of the columns.
 - D. Admit or Deny that Monorail allows more people to drive who need to access areas not serviced by rapid transit, and stands a far greater chance of providing real mobility to both the Monorail patron and the auto driver.
3. Paragraph Three: You state, “We believe that light rail is just as, if not more, environmentally-friendly, quiet, (electric-powered), and affords its passengers wonderful views of our city.”
 - A. Admit or Deny that there will be substantially more noise associated with LRT than with Monorail.

- B. Admit or Deny that metal flanges on metal rails always causes wear from grinding and noise is always associated with that grinding.
 - C. Admit or Deny that there will be clanging bells, lights and gates at intersections crossed by these streetcars.
 - D. Admit or Deny that Monorail is designed for quiet operation, that the monorail at Disney World passes through a hotel with guests sleeping above, and that whatever noise associated with rubber on concrete is lessened by the cowling that wraps around the beam and the wheels.
 - E. Admit or Deny that the current plan of the Rapid Transit Project is to power these vehicles with diesel or other petroleum fuel, not with electricity.
 - F. Admit or Deny that in cities with electric light rail the overhead power lines are often ugly and an eyesore.
 - G. Admit or Deny that the view afforded by the light rail is worse than the view from the Monorail, and is identical to the view from a bus, but that the 'view' is not now and never has been a criterion for mode selection.
 - H. Admit or Deny that your belief is just that: a belief unsupported by facts.
4. Paragraph Four: You state the following: "In terms of construction disruption, monorail columns must be constructed on new medians and may require construction in the middle of an existing roadway. Often, existing utilities must be completely rerouted and/or replaced, just as in the case of constructing a light rail line, a subway or even an everyday road construction project."
- A. Admit or Deny that LRT absolutely requires construction in the middle of an existing roadway or along its sides.
 - B. Admit or Deny that LRT construction in any given area can take years of having the streets torn up (i.e., Houston: Began April, 2001 to anticipated completion in 2004; many adjacent businesses had to close or move), whereas Monorail can be built with no damage to existing businesses, no street closures, and can be constructed at a rate of one mile per month.
 - C. Admit or Deny that LRT construction *always* requires complete removal and relocation of all underground utilities now located in the street due to

its massive weight and due to the fact that its electricity leaches from the rails into the soil and corrodes the metal utility lines at an accelerated rate.

- D. Admit or Deny that the underground utilities must be removed from the LRT route because access for repair would become prohibitively costly unless the entire LRT system is constructed on in-ground bridges.
 - E. Admit or Deny that Monorail construction only occasionally requires adjustment of utility lines since it's small footprint only interacts with possible utility lines every 100 to 130 feet; and that overall, the positioning of the Monorail line and its columns is vastly more versatile than locating LRT. Ultimately it may be easier to have beams of varying length in order to not disturb existing utilities, a feature that only Monorail can offer.
 - F. Admit or Deny that Capital Metro and the City of Austin's plans call for the City Utilities to bear the cost of this utility replacement as to their lines so that Capital Metro will not have to show these costs as part of construction.
 - G. Admit or Deny that Plaza Saltillo was constructed by the City of Austin and was destined to be a light rail station so that Capital Metro would not have to build this facility at their cost.
 - H. Admit or Deny that Monorail columns do not need a median in which to run; that Monorail can be placed on the side of any street or sidewalk, or anywhere found to be optimum placement. We believe this is another deliberately specious statement.
5. Paragraph Four: You state, "Additionally, the construction that you mention (the column and trackway construction) does not reflect the very intense and costly construction associated with the stations themselves."
- A. Admit or Deny that LRT stations involve 'intense and costly construction' when the street must be widened to accommodate them without reducing the existing traffic lanes.
 - B. Admit or Deny that LRT stations involve great cost to the driving public in terms of time, expenditure of fuel, and adding to pollution when autos and trucks must be diverted off the main road onto side streets to accommodate the LRT stations (i.e., RTP's anticipated Guadalupe Station at the north end of the UT campus).
 - C. Admit or Deny that Monorail stations can be constructed alongside existing buildings or even within existing and future buildings, over

parking lots and two story buildings, and in other places considered to be out of the way and safer than in the middle of the street.

- D. Admit or Deny that station cost is a one-time capital expense that will be retired as the bonds are retired, and that Monorail has the unique ability to pay for itself out of the farebox, as the Las Vegas public and private segments are expected to do.
6. In paragraph 5 you write, “With regard to your point that monorail costs are comparable or lower than street rail, evidence suggests the contrary. I have included information in the attachment with contradicts this opinion.”
- A. Admit or Deny that the “information” you use you know to be deliberately false, misleading, self-serving, and prepared by persons with a bias toward LRT.
 - B. Admit or Deny that many public Monorail systems around the world are entirely self-supporting from the farebox, and that even Las Vegas anticipates retiring its bonds from the farebox as well, as reported to the Federal Transit Administration.
 - C. Admit or Deny that no streetcar or LRT system can make the claim of being self-supporting from its farebox.
 - D. Admit or Deny that operation and maintenance of Monorail is far less costly than operation and maintenance of LRT.
7. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “One of the 2001 public workshops focused on the appropriate ‘Vehicle Technology’ for the Austin area, that is, the evaluation and selection of the appropriate type(s) of transit, including bus rapid transit, light rail, subway, monorail, etc.” With unusual candor, this paper further states, “*The recommendation by the lead transit consultant and confirmed by the Capital Metro Board was to use light rail technology for the starter line.*” [Emphasis exactly as shown.]

We note that this is technically an honest statement because it shows that the workshop was a farce, and that the public had no input. The decision was based on a decision by an unnamed “lead traffic consultant” and ratified by a Board that deliberately hired biased consultants, a fact which we proved at a Capital Metro Board meeting.

No admission or denial is required here since the paper did it for us.

8. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Light rail is a high-capacity technology well-matched to the starter line needs of linking very high-density destinations and employment areas.”
 - A. Admit or Deny that LRT is not high-capacity, that the very term ‘light rail’ refers to its lower capacity, not its weight.
 - B. Admit or Deny that Monorail has the same or greater capacity due to its ability to run on a dedicated right-of-way with computerized operation that does not require a driver or motorman, and can thus achieve headways of as little as two minutes, circulating equipment and passengers far more efficiently.
 - C. Admit or Deny that Monorail has a greater ability to move people from a variety of locations to anywhere else in the city due to its superior ability to handle Austin’s hills and curves.
9. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Light rail provides the best mobility benefits for its cost.”
 - A. Admit or Deny that this is a wholly self-serving statement, when ‘mobility’ of the LRT is itself limited to traffic conditions in all but those few areas where it will run on a dedicated right-of-way, apart from auto and pedestrian traffic, while elevated Monorail can guarantee mobility.
 - B. Admit or Deny from the perspective of City Planning, that commingling massive metal vehicles with a mix of pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos is a disaster waiting to happen.
10. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Light rail is a “tried and true” technology enjoying great success (high ridership) in many cities throughout the United States.”
 - A. Admit or Deny that horse-drawn streetcars and what they accomplished in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s were also a “tried and true” technology for their time, and that the time came to move on to something better; that communities did not perpetuate horse-drawn streetcars *because* it was “tried and true.”
 - B. Admit or Deny that just as this is a new era and horse drawn carriages would not be applicable to our time, so too does Monorail replace LRT

with the guaranteed mobility that Austin citizens truly need without the significant disadvantages of LRT.

- C. Admit or Deny that LRT cannot guarantee mobility due to the fact that it will always be challenged by street conditions of one kind or another.
 - D. Admit or Deny that U.S. LRT systems kill and continue to kill an average of two persons per year per system who are unfortunate enough to get in its way, that they injure and cripple many more, and that you have factored these deaths and maimings into your definition of “success.”
11. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Light rail is a highly ‘fundable’ technology from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) point of view, who would be the primary funding agent of Austin's starter system.”
- A. Admit or Deny that the Federal Transit Administration has approved funding for the public portion of the Las Vegas Monorail and is sponsoring the Pinellas County, Florida Monorail study.
 - B. Admit or Deny that the Federal Transit Administration’s guidelines for New Starts specifically allows for Monorail mass transit systems.
12. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Light rail integrates well within the central core of Austin, in terms of easily accessible, pedestrian-oriented, urban design that can promote healthy community interaction and economic development, largely because it is located on the surface, rather than being submerged or elevated -- isolated from community places and businesses.”
- A. Admit or Deny that mixing rails and pedestrians and other traffic are essentially incompatible, that the vast majority of deaths and injuries caused by rail of any kind are a result of the train’s presence in urban settings.
 - B. Admit or Deny that killing pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists as LRT all-too-regularly does is NOT a healthy community interaction by *any* standard, and is wholly unacceptable in Austin when a superior, competitive technology is readily available.
 - C. Admit or Deny that Monorail is also ‘easily accessible’ when it can be accessed by elevators, stairs, ramps, through existing buildings, etc.
 - D. Admit or Deny that Monorail can provide a far healthier environment for pedestrians and businesses by not employing 200,000 lb. two-car consists

in the streets, by not causing excessive vibration within adjoining businesses and homes, by not corroding metal re-bar in building foundations (that cannot be relocated as utilities can), etc.

- E. Admit or Deny that elevated Monorail cannot be considered under any circumstances to be “isolated from community places and businesses,” another specious argument by your unauthored, unattributed attachment.
 - F. Admit or Deny that elevated Monorail can be routed directly into heavily trafficked commercial areas such as shopping malls and stadiums that cannot be serviced as effectively by LRT.
13. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “First and foremost, an overarching principle is that the vehicle technology chosen should be one that has been operating effectively as a general purpose transit system in the United States for at least 5 years. Monorail does not meet this requirement.”
- A. Admit or Deny that this was never a criterion for transit mode selection in the RTP’s Milestone Two ‘study’ and that it is being included here because you are desperate to ‘raise the bar’ and make it more difficult for competing technologies to argue against LRT. This is further evidenced by employing a 25¢ word like “overarching” so late in the program, as if it had always been so self-evident that it did not need to be included in the original criteria.
 - B. Admit or Deny that NO purpose is served in limiting the scope of this newly invented requirement to systems within the United States, other than to try to exclude Monorail, the obvious first-choice of people in Los Angeles, Houston, Seattle, and elsewhere where Americans have been granted enough Freedom that they were actually allowed to vote their preference.
 - C. Admit or Deny that the Disney Parks, and the Cities of Seattle and Las Vegas have been using Monorail to move millions of people per year for over 30 years very effectively, efficiently and without any fatalities whatsoever.
14. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, “Monorail technology, to date in the US, has not proven effective for connecting suburbs with central city destinations, the function required for Austin's starter line.”
- A. Admit or Deny that since in light of your earlier statement that no such system exists in the United States this is an obvious self-serving statement

that has no purpose other than to create doubt where no factual question of Monorail's ability exists.

- B. Admit or Deny that the restriction of limiting the scope of this question to the United States is for no other purpose than to elicit a negative response, despite the fact that almost 50 multi-station passenger Monorails are operating worldwide. This does not include monorails used for industrial hauling.
 - C. Admit or Deny that elevated Monorail systems all over the world move millions of people effectively and efficiently from the suburbs to the central city, and do so without interruption to street traffic and without maiming and killing pedestrians and motorists.
 - D. Admit or Deny that only Monorail affords the opportunity to run expresses that bypass other monorail cars and stations; that LRT would require double the amount of street space to accomplish the same; further that any LRT 'expresses' would still be restricted by street and traffic conditions.
 - E. State for the record by whom this function is 'required' ("...the function required for Austin's starter line").
15. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, "The cost of monorail is generally about three times the cost of light rail. (Las Vegas' proposed monorail project is ranging between \$140 to \$170 million per mile.)"
- A. Admit or Deny that the privately funded Las Vegas line already under construction, initiated by the Casinos, and considered by some to be extravagant in its appearance and technology, is coming in at a capital cost of \$87 million per mile for a \$342.3 million fixed-price contract with performance and completion date guarantees for 3.9 miles of fixed facilities plus the operating system and utility allowance, not \$140 to \$170 million as you allege.
 - B. Seattle's LRT was coming in at \$180 million per mile; its Monorail is expected to cost \$117.6 million per mile (Seattle has significant topographical challenges). Pinellas County, Florida, estimates LRT to cost up to \$50 million per mile (at grade); the Monorail it has selected is expected to cost from \$45 million to \$65 million per mile. Admit or Deny that Monorail is clearly *not* three times the cost of LRT as you are stating.
 - C. Admit or Deny that Capital Metro's application to the FTA showed a cost in Year Of Expenditure (YOE) dollars (YR 2002?) to be approximately \$51 million per mile (\$739 million for 14.6 miles), a sum that the FTA

stated was low due to 'Capital Metro's relatively low estimate for contingencies' (FTA 2001 New Starts Report).

- D. Admit or Deny that NO realistic cost estimate for elevated monorail was ever prepared or even attempted by Capital Metro or the Rapid Transit Project (RTP).
 - E. Admit or Deny that Capital Metro and the RTP never considered Monorail openly and honestly, and has always hired consultants and employees who were already committed to LRT and opposed to Monorail for reasons of their own, despite the fact that federal money was supposed to have been used in this evaluation..
16. Your unauthored, unattributed attachment states, "...monorail ... increases visual congestion and poses privacy issues.... [E]levated vehicles and their structures will be a major issue, particularly as it traverses the Capitol View Corridors, protected by City and State ordinance. These elevated structures may be deemed as adversely impacting historic properties...."
- A. Admit or Deny that elevated monorail is slender and will not pose "visual congestion," and sadly for Austin, will not even shade the street under it.
 - B. Admit or Deny that overhead catenary encountered with electric LRT can be "visually congestive," and could pose environmental electromagnetic field health problems.
 - C. Admit or Deny that Capital Metro, and the Rapid Transit Project have plans to elevate portions of the LRT which would add even greater "visual congestion" than the sleek monorail pillars and beams.
 - D. Admit or Deny that the in-street route of the LRT making its at-grade crossings will cause more congestion and cause cars to be on the road longer and further diminish air quality benefits. (A finding of the Light Rail Blue Ribbon Task Force of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce – Light Rail Transit White Paper, August 2000.)
 - E. Inasmuch as the Austin Monorail Project has analyzed any possible impact of each and every segment of its proposed route with respect to the Capitol View Corridors, Admit or Deny that you have made this statement presumptively and without doing any similar analysis.
 - F. Admit or Deny that the rumbling, shaking and tremors caused by 200,000 lb. vehicles on city streets may cause significant damage to historic (older) buildings in Austin, just as they have in other cities.

- G. Admit or Deny that this statement is another specious statement designed to be deceptive and imply problems supposedly unique to Monorail where no such problems exist.

Thank you for taking the time to reply to this series of challenges to the statements contained in the referenced letter. We look forward to receiving your response at your earliest convenience. We look forward to being available to clear up any further misconceptions.

Very sincerely,

Thomas Denney
Co-Director

cc:

Hon. Austin City Council Members
Ms. Toby Futrell, City Manager
Ms. Lisa Y. Gordon, Assistant City Manager
Mr. John Almond, Project Director
Ms. Jana McCann, City Planner