



**CONVERSATION
CORPS**

ATXtalks.org

Why we are here today?



- To provide an overview of Conversation Corps
- To discuss our scheduled conversation for July, “Affordability”
- To receive feedback on potential questions to be used during our July conversations



CONVERSATION CORPS



Administered By:



What is Conversation Corps?



- **Mission:** Conversation Corps engages the people of Austin in meaningful civic dialogue focused on public issues, hosted by community facilitators at venues across the entire city.
- **Vision:** Conversation Corps envisions an Austin in which all have opportunity to participate in facilitated conversations about Austin where they live, work and play, convened by volunteers on behalf of multiple agencies, including the City of Austin, Capital Metro and others

What is Conversation Corps?



- Every month, groups will meet all around town, discussing the same “issue of the month.”
- Conversations will take place in a variety of venues - schools, houses of worship, community centers, coffee shops and restaurants – and will last about an hour.
- Trained facilitators will lead the group through a structured dialogue, giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts and respond to what they’ve heard others say.
- We’ll deliver feedback from the conversation to the decision makers behind each issue and give participants the resources needed to stay in the loop and hear how their input affected decisions.

What do conversation hosts do?



It is the host's job to:

- Make everyone feel welcome and comfortable
- Set the parameters for how the conversation will flow
- Keep the conversation moving, making sure all voices are heard and none are too dominant
- Ensure that conversation stays focused on the topic
- Mitigate conflict among participants if needed by reminding them of the discussion agreements
- Summarize feedback from the group and submit it to Conversation Corps staff

It is not the host's job to:

- Be an expert on the topic
- Give their own thoughts and opinions about the topic
- Correct any statements of fact

Feedback Loop

Topics Selection

- Topic of the next conversation is selected by an Inter-Agency Committee. The public is notified of the topic.

1-2 weeks

Review of Feedback

- Your feedback is given to the relevant agency for review and possible action.
- You will be notified at your next Conversation of the progress.

Varies

Conversations

- Conversations on the selected topic are held throughout the city. Feedback is gathered.

3-6 months

Data Gathering

- Your conversation host provides your feedback to the City. The feedback from groups throughout the city is posted online.

2-3 weeks

Conversation Structure



Activity	Time
Welcome & Overview	2 min
Thank you!	
Explain The Process	
Commit to Discussion Agreements	
Facilitation of Conversation in 4 rounds	60 min
1: Introduce: Who are you?	5 min
Preview the Topic	3 min
2: Share: What are you initial thoughts about this issue? What matters most to you? <i>(Group member shares their thoughts one at a time, uninterrupted)</i>	20 min
3: Respond: What else has come up for you after hearing the thoughts of others? <i>(Group members interact, responding to one another's comments)</i>	20 min
4: Summarize: What do we want to make sure the decision makers hear?	15 min
Thank You & Next Steps	5 min

Conversation Topics



- Each month, a topic will be chosen by one or more of the partnering agencies.
- The topics will pertain to all the people of Austin, rather than only certain geographic areas.
- The topics will be timed in such a way that the agencies are able to spend a full month gathering input and have enough time both to prepare hosts the prior month and to incorporate participant input subsequently.
- Topics will come from members of the Steering Committee (Cap Metro, AISD, City of Austin) and potentially suggestions from the public or hosts.

Conversation Topics



- May – Budget Priorities
- June - Mobility
- July - **Affordability**
- August - Community Engagement
- September - Workforce Development
- October - Transit Services

Affordability



- Committee charge:
 - *The Committee may solicit public feedback on and discuss matters related to affordability, including **potential bond measures, opportunities to strengthen partnerships for improved service delivery, elimination of duplicative services between agencies to achieve cost savings,** parameters for addressing factors having a significant impact on cost of living, best practices of other cities, counties and school districts, and any other relevant topics related to maintaining and promoting affordability...*

Affordability



- Questions for community:
 - What does affordability or affordable living mean to you?
 - What is the most significant factor in making the quality of life you desire unaffordable?
 - What tradeoffs would you be willing to accept for affordability? E.g. More density, higher taxes, smaller homes, less driving, etc.
 - Where are services duplicative? How can we eliminate redundancy and create partnerships to find cost savings?
 - Other committee suggestions?

Questions?



Julie Smith

Program Manager

jsmith@leadershipaustin.org

512.499.0435 x114

Larry Schooler

Community Engagement Division Manager

City of Austin

Larry.Schooler@austintexas.gov

512-974-6004

Linda Medina

Department of Communications and Community Engagement

Austin Independent School District

Linda.medina@austinisd.org

512-414-9706

Celso Baez

Community Involvement

Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Celso.baez@capmetro.org

512-369-7759