



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager 

From: Carrie Rogers, Government Relations Officer 

Date: September 1, 2026

Subject: **Austin Government Relations Update – August 2026**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an overview of key activities, coordination efforts, and major initiatives undertaken by the Austin Government Relations (AGR) office during August 2026.

Legislative Division Highlights – State

State legislative activity has remained steady throughout the interim and is picking up as we near pre-filing for the 90th Texas Legislature on November 10, 2026.

Upcoming Legislative Hearings Related to City Finances & Fees

Senate Local Government Hearing on Fees

The Senate Local Government Committee will hold a hearing on [Wednesday, September 2](#), on several items relevant to the City, including a charge related to local government fees:

Holding Local Government Fees Accountable: *Examine the collection, use, and oversight of fees imposed by local governments, including but not limited to utility connection charges, permit and inspection fees, and drainage or stormwater improvement fees. Evaluate whether these fees are subject to adequate financial transparency requirements and whether independent audits should be required. Make necessary recommendations to enhance accountability and ensure fee revenues are used solely for their intended public purposes.*

House Ways & Means Hearing on Local Government Spending

The House Ways & Means Committee will hold a hearing on [Tuesday, September 15](#), on local government spending:

Local Government Spending: *Examine local government spending and debt practices, including the use of certificates of obligation, to determine the overall impact on property tax rates. Evaluate other revenue sources, such as fees, utilized by local units of government to facilitate increased spending. Make recommendations to improve the long-term affordability for Texas families by limiting the growth of local government spending.*

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AGR is working with departments to prepare for the hearings and will update Mayor and City Council as we move forward.

Senate Committee on Transportation Hearing on Autonomous Vehicles

The Senate Transportation Committee met on [Tuesday, August 25](#), to consider an interim charge relating to the deployment of autonomous vehicle (AV) technology:

Studying the Deployment of Autonomous Vehicle Technology: Study the deployment of autonomous vehicle technology as authorized by SB 2807, (89th Session), including rule-making adopted by the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. Quantify the impact on traffic-related collisions. Make recommendations to ensure that the continued deployment of autonomous vehicles prioritizes public safety and aligns with the evolving technological landscape on Texas roads.

Austin Transportation Public Works Director Richard Mendoza attended the hearing to serve as a resource witness for the committee and APD Lieutenant William White testified at the hearing about Austin's experiences with AVs. In his testimony, Lieutenant White noted that autonomous vehicles can and do commit moving violations and discussed the barriers officers face in issuing tickets to autonomous vehicles compared to ticketing human drivers. AGR will continue to work with departments to educate legislators on autonomous vehicles as we prepare for the upcoming legislative session. Video of the hearing is available [here](#) beginning at 1:20:39.

New Women's Health House Subcommittee and Interim Charges

On August 12, Speaker Dustin Burrows released [new supplemental interim committee charges](#) for the House Committee on Public Health this afternoon. The new charges are related to women's health care and do not appear to have a direct impact on City services. The Speaker also directed House Public Health Chairman Gary VanDeaver to create a new subcommittee to study the charges. The Maternal Health, Menopause and Access to Evidence-Based Medicine Subcommittee will be chaired by Rep. Katina Pierson, who will be joined by Reps. Elizabeth Campos and Joanne Shofner on the new subcommittee.

The supplemental charges and a copy of Speaker Burrows's announcement are attached, and the charges are also copied below. We will monitor the related hearings for awareness and for potential impacts to City employee benefits.

Public Health

On [Thursday, August 20](#), the House Committee on Public Health held a hearing on several health-related issues, including public health trends and prevention, infant mortality prevention, and the impact of social media on youth health and well-being. Adrienne Sturup, the Director of Austin Public Health and President of the Texas Association of City & County Health Officials ([TACCHO](#)), and Dr. Desmar Walkes, Austin Public Health Medical Director, attended the hearing and [registered on the Committee's interim charge](#) related to public health trends and prevention. Video of the House Public Health hearing is available [here](#).

AGR staff continues to meet with partners regarding Austin-Travis County work at the intersection of mental health, homelessness and public safety. Many cities and counties across Texas are facing

similar challenges. With the Health and Human Services Commission undergoing Sunset review this cycle, an interim report is due out later this year, which is expected to consider recommendations to address these issues. Mayor Watson outlined local challenges in a letter shared to Sunset Chair Lois Kolkhorst in July, with input provided by Austin-area practitioners who have experience in this space. Additionally, testimony was given earlier this summer during the House and Senate interim hearings.

Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher Program – FY 2028-2029 Funding Request

As part of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)'s FY 2028-2029 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR), the agency has requested \$6,752,200 in funds to provide contracted services for the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher program, which helps young adults exiting foster care secure stable housing as they transition to independent living. The funding would enhance DFPS's capacity to administer the program and strengthen service delivery for eligible youth. During each interim, State agencies submit LARs to Legislative Budget Board. The requests must still work their way through the appropriations process during the legislative session.

The positive progression of funding relating to foster youth homelessness is one element of an overall legislative strategy to elevate both focus and resources on homelessness, mental health, and public safety needs for vulnerable populations.

Legislative Division Highlights – Federal

USCM Committee Leadership Update

Mayor Watson has been [appointed](#) Chair of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) Standing Committee on Development & Housing, a national leadership role that will position Austin to help shape federal housing policy, influence implementation of major laws such as [H.R. 6644](#) – the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act – and strengthen coordination with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal agencies on affordability, permitting, modernization, and community development priorities. This appointment will provide Mayor Watson an opportunity to elevate the needs of cities in national housing discussions and strengthen local engagement in upcoming federal initiatives.

FAA Unmanned Aircraft Flight Restrictions Comments Update

The City of Austin submitted formal comments to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding the [proposed rule](#) titled *Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility*, outlining key considerations for municipal infrastructure, public-safety operations, and airspace management. The proposed rule would establish a national process for Unmanned Aircraft Flight Restrictions (UAFRs) at critical facilities, including water and wastewater systems, airports, and energy assets, and Austin supports the creation of a consistent, transparent, petition framework. The City recommends clearer guidance on eligibility criteria, the role of municipal operators in vulnerable assessments, Remote ID expectations, and the balance between federal security interests and the operational needs of local public-safety agencies. The City recommends clearer guidance on eligibility criteria, the role of municipal operators in vulnerability assessments, Remote ID expectations, and the balance between federal security interests and the operational needs of local public-safety agencies. The City also requests precise boundary definitions, streamlined emergency exemptions, and rapid authorization mechanisms to ensure emergency response and utility drone operations remain uninterrupted. Additional comments encourage FAA to recognize local incident data in threat evaluations and to create a pathway for temporary airspace protections for major municipal events not covered by existing Temporary Flight Restrictions.

FCC Alerting Systems Comments Update

The City of Austin submitted formal comments to the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding its [proposed rule](#) titled *Wireless Emergency Alerts; The Emergency Alert System; Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems*. The proposed rule modernizes national alerting infrastructure by improving geotargeting accuracy, expanded messaging formats, and strengthening technical requirements for both Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) operations. The City recommends clearer standards for precise geographic targeting, expanded use of detailed CAP-based location information, and removal of the outdated 90-character message limitations to improve clarity and effectiveness of protective messaging. The City also recommends stronger broadcaster participation and better alignment between federal rules and local alerting authorities. As a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved IPAWS alerting authority, the City highlights the need for dependable, timely alerts for flash-flood hazards, severe weather, and rapidly evolving public-safety incidents. The City further recommends continued focus on cybersecurity risk and strengthened collaboration among federal, state, and local partners to maintain public confidence in critical alerting systems.

HUD's FY 2026 Homelessness Funding Notice

On August 7, 2026, the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island vacated the Department of Housing and Urban Department (HUD)'s FY 2026 [Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#), ruling that HUD failed to follow required federal notice-and-comment procedures in issuing major policy changes. As a result, HUD has paused the CoC competition, cannot accept applications, and must restart the NOFO process. This ruling blocks the Administration's attempted shift away from long-standing Housing First strategies and prevents disruption to permanent supportive housing programs serving thousands nationwide. City staff will monitor HUD's next steps and assess any local impacts once a revised NOFO is issued.

Grants Division Highlights

Acquisition (Pre-award)

- The City received notice of a \$114,755 award from the Office of the Governor for Austin Police Department (APD) Peace Officer Mental Health Project (POMH, FY27). APD's Victim Services and Employee Wellness Division presented this POMH proposal for continuation of its existing First Responder Mental Health (FRMH) project. The project goal is to support officers, as they are repeatedly exposed to vicarious trauma and stress in the line of duty, through the use of a part-time program manager and one full-time dog handler.
- APD received a \$464,939 grant in the DOJ's FY26 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program. The grant will cover training and professional development costs APD staff during the grant period.
- APD received notice from TxDOT Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority (MVCPA) that it will be awarded \$532,000 for FY27 to support its Auto Burglary and Theft Interdiction Program. Grant funds will cover officer overtime, community outreach and equipment purchases aimed at reducing auto theft.
- AGR submitted the Healthy and Sustainable Communities Grant application to the U.S. Conference of Mayors on August 14 in support of Generation ATX. Developed in coordination with Austin Parks and Recreation and the Mayor's Office, the proposal would create interactive, shaded outdoor spaces at selected Raising Travis County childcare centers.

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- APD submitted an application for the DOJ Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Microgrants Program. The application requests funds to increase the implementation of Behavioral Threat Assessment Management (BTAM), which is an evidence-based program for identifying, assessing and intervening with individuals on a pathway to committing violence. The request is for \$200,000.
- APH submitted an application for the DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) 2026 Grants to Improve the Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program (ICJR Program). APH was invited by OVW to apply for continued funding for its FTAP (Firearm Technical Assistance Program), which helps establish firearms surrender protocols for domestic violence cases. The two-year request is for \$400,000.
- APH submitted the required application to DOJ to receive the \$1,031,000 Community Project Funding (CPF) FY26 Award secured by Representative Doggett. The funds will support APH's Community Violence Intervention Program which prevents violence in targeted areas of Austin.
- ACAR submitted the full application to FEMA that is required to receive the \$1.1 million CPF Award secured by Representative Doggett. The funds support the purchase and installation of battery energy storage systems at Montopolis Recreation Center.

Should you have any questions, please contact Carrie Rogers, Government Relations Officer, at Carrie.Rogers@AustinTexas.gov, or Erika Dzangare, Deputy Government Relations Officer, at Erika.Dzangare@AustinTexas.gov.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Austin Government Relations

Appendix:

Appendix A – Federal Rulemaking Tracker

Attachments:

Attachment A – FAA Fixed-Site Designation-Restriction Comments

Attachment B – FCC Alerting Systems Comments

Attachment C – Texas House Supplemental Interim Charges

Attachment D – Congressional Project Funding Status

Attachment E – Mayor Watson Letter to Sunset Committee Chair Lois Kolkhorst

Appendix A – City of Austin Upcoming Rulemaking Deadline Tracker

Notice Title & Docket Number	Status	Federal Agency Summary
<u>AV Framework Updates and Request for Comments on Interim Guidance</u> – [Docket No. NHTSA-2026-1552]	Reviewing Due Aug. 31, 2026	<i>In April 2025, DOT and NHTSA announced a new automated vehicle framework designed to prioritize safety, promote innovation, foster American ingenuity, and remove regulatory barriers to the advancement of automated driving system technologies. This notice furthers NHTSA's implementation of this framework by requesting public comment on interim guidance for commercial deployment exemptions for automated vehicles. This notice also summarizes NHTSA's other recent activity relating to the AV Framework.</i>
<u>Counter-UAS Authority for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Law Enforcement and Correctional Agencies</u> – Docket No. FBI-2026-000	Reviewing Due Sept. 4, 2026	<i>In this interim final rule (“IFR”), the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) (collectively, “the Departments”) codify the framework for implementing the SAFER SKIES Act, which authorizes State, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement or correctional (“SLTT”) agencies to conduct counter-unmanned aircraft system (“C-UAS”) operations. This framework governs training and certification (including a two-tiered structure for detection and warning operations and for mitigation operations), authorized technologies, spectrum coordination, airspace approval, real-time air traffic control notification, mitigation reporting, privacy protections, and compliance requirements for SLTT agencies in relation to the exercise of C-UAS authority.</i>
<u>Rescission of Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands; Minimum Property Standards for Flood Hazard Exposure; Building to the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard</u> – Docket No. FR-6527-P-01	Reviewing Due Sept. 8, 2026	<i>This proposed rule would revise HUD's regulations governing floodplain management and the protection of wetlands in accordance with <u>Executive Order 14148</u>, entitled “Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions.” <u>Executive Order 14148</u> revoked an earlier executive order that formed a basis for the final rule that HUD published on April 23, 2024, entitled “Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands; Minimum Property Standards for Flood Hazard Exposure; Building to the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard.” This proposed rule generally would restore HUD's regulations to their state prior to the publication of the April 23, 2024, final rule, although it would maintain flexibilities from that rule related to floodways, categorical exclusions, exemptions from Part 55 applicability, and the decision making process; it also proposes minor revisions for clarity.</i>
<u>60-Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Recipient Financial Reporting for Grant Programs</u> – Docket No. FR-7093-N-06	Reviewing Due Sept. 8, 2026	<i>HUD is seeking approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the information collection described below. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, HUD is requesting comments from all interested parties on the proposed collection of information. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment.</i>
<u>Build America: Eliminating Barriers to Wireline</u>	Reviewing	<i>In this document, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) proposes and seeks comment on rules that would eliminate state and local requirements that constrain the deployment of modern high-</i>

Appendix A – City of Austin Upcoming Rulemaking Deadline Tracker

Notice Title & Docket Number	Status	Federal Agency Summary
<u>Deployments</u> – WC Docket No. 25-253	Due. Sept. 21, 2026	<i>speed wireline infrastructure in violation of section 253 of the Communications Act (Act), particularly through the imposition of excessive delays and fees that impede infrastructure deployments and disincentivize investments in them. Based on the record resulting from a Notice of Inquiry that identified numerous challenges providers face in offering telecommunications services and deploying wireline infrastructure (2025 Notice of Inquiry), this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on codifying rules that would: establish a rebuttable presumption that state and local governments have effectively prohibited the provision of wireline telecommunications services if they fail to process all authorizations for use of public rights-of-way to provide wireline telecommunications services or to deploy wireline telecommunications infrastructure within 120 days; limit the fees that state and local governments may charge for a wireline telecommunications authorization to a reasonable approximation of the government's actual, direct costs of managing the rights-of-way with respect to that authorization and establish safe harbor fee levels that presumptively comport with that standard; require that the value of in-kind compensation demanded by state and local governments count toward any safe harbor fee levels adopted by the Commission; and prohibit state and local governments from imposing additional requirements on wireline telecommunications infrastructure deployments on the grounds that the infrastructure may be used to provide other services. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also seeks comment on the Commission's authority to enact these proposals.</i>
<u>Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems; Protecting the Nation's Communications Systems From Cybersecurity Threats</u> – PS Docket Nos. 22-329, 25-224	Reviewing Due. Sept. 29, 2026	<i>In the Report and Order, the Federal Communications Commission (the FCC or the Commission) seeks to preserve the public's trust in the Emergency Alert System (EAS) by requiring targeted cybersecurity improvements that will help protect against hijacking by cybercriminals and our nation's adversaries.</i>
<u>Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs</u> – ACF-2026-0595	Reviewing Due. Oct. 6, 2026	<i>This NPRM proposes to rescind and replace the Head Start Program Performance Standards (Performance Standards), last revised in 2024. The proposed Performance Standards would significantly reduce Federal bureaucratic burden on programs; defer to State policies wherever possible; return substantial local control to Head Start agencies delivering the services and to parents as the primary caregivers and decision-makers for their children; reduce unnecessary duplication of Head Start regulations with Federal statute and other regulations; and emphasize the critical role of health, nutrition, and physical exercise for young children.</i>



August 3, 2026

Docket Operations
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE,
Room W58-213, West Building 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Re: City of Austin Comments – Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility; Extension of Comment Period [Docket No. FAA-2026-4558; Notice No. 26-03A]

Submitted electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov>.

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the City of Austin, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)'s [notice](#) titled *“Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility; Extension of Comment Period.”*

As Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) technology continues to expand, communities increasingly depend on reliable and coordinated airspace protections that support both innovation and the safe, secure functioning of essential public infrastructure and the community.

The City appreciates the FAA's efforts to establish a consistent, national petition process for Unmanned Aircraft Flight Restrictions (UAFRs). As drone use increases in dense metropolitan environments, this rule provides needed structure for local governments and operators of critical infrastructure.

General Comments

The City of Austin supports the FAA's goal of establishing a transparent, consistent national framework for requesting Unmanned Aircraft Flight Restrictions (UAFRs). We appreciate the rule's focus on critical infrastructure, Remote ID-based transparency, and clear application and maintenance requirements. Several City departments maintain facilities, corridors, and systems that could benefit from predictable federal airspace designations.

The City also recommends that the final rule explicitly confirm that UAFR designations do not limit or diminish any detection, identification, mitigation, or enforcement capability otherwise authorized under federal law. These activities, when properly coordinated, are essential to ensuring that security

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Subject: City of Austin Comments – Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility; Extension of Comment Period [Docket No. FAA-2026-4558; Notice No. 26-03A]

operations do not interfere with the National Airspace System, airport operations, emergency response, public-safety UAS missions, or authorized utility operations.

The City additionally supports the implementation of geofencing technologies and other FAA-approved measures to help prevent unauthorized UAS activity around sensitive areas, consistent with City Council [Resolution No. 20231214-070](#). To further support FAA's proposed framework, the City provides the following section-specific comments and recommendations:

Specific Comments by Section

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
I. Executive Summary (pp. 24650-24653)	FAA outlines the purpose of the rule, the statutory background under Section 2209, the creation of Standard and Special UAFRs, applicant eligibility, and the national policy objective of protecting critical infrastructure while maintaining the public right of way.	The City recommends FAA explicitly clarify the role of municipal operators of critical infrastructure – such as water treatment facilities, airports, and energy assets – in Sector Risk Management Agencies (SRMA) coordination and evaluations. Ensuring local input in vulnerable documentation will improve safety and accuracy.
II. Authority for This Rulemaking (p. 24653)	FAA cites its authority under 49 U.S.C. 40103, 44701, and Section 2209 to regulate airspace and restrict UAS operations over designated fixed-site facilities.	The City supports the FAA's authority and recommends enhanced transparency about how national security interests will be balanced with operational needs of municipal public safety agencies and utilities.
III. Background and Statement of the Problem (pp. 24653-24656)	FAA identifies the growing risks posed by UAS to critical infrastructure, citing incidents involving chemical energy facilities, chemical plants, correctional facilities, and industrial operations. The FAA explains current enforcement limitations and the need for a formal mechanism to distinguish compliant from non-compliant operations.	The City of Austin requests that the FAA allow municipalities to submit evidence of local UAS incidents – including law enforcement reports, public-safety conflicts, or unauthorized overflights – as part of the vulnerability assessment. This will strengthen the accuracy of threat determinations. The City further encourages stricter enforcement of existing FAA registration and operator-certification requirements to reduce risks associated with careless or malicious drone use.
IV. Overview of the Proposed Rule – (pp. 24656-24657)	FAA provides an overview of the Part 74 structure, including definitions of Standard vs. Special	The City supports this tiered approach, enabling flexible risk management. We recommend FAA expectations for public safety access into Special UAFRs during emergencies,

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Subject: City of Austin Comments – Designation-Restrict the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft in Close Proximity to a Fixed Site Facility; Extension of Comment Period [Docket No. FAA-2026-4558; Notice No. 26-03A]

Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
	Unmanned Aircraft Flight Restrictions (UAFRs), eligibility, activation periods, public-notification requirements, and enforcement mechanisms (civil and criminal penalties).	coordination near municipal airports, and communication and deconfliction expectations for operators transiting UAFRs during emergency incidents. Additionally, the City requests that the FAA clarify how local governments should request airspace protections for temporary events that do not fall within the fixed-site UAFS framework. While some major sporting events or high-security events are eligible for Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs), many high-attendance or high-risk municipal events do not fit neatly into existing TFR categories. FAA guidance notes that TFRs restrict aircraft, including drones, for limited periods and are communicated through Notice to Air Missions (NOTAMs). The City asks the FAA to provide a clear pathway for requesting temporary protections for predictable public-safety risks not currently covered by the proposed rule or existing TFR structures. In alignment with City Council Resolution No. 20231214-070, the City also requests FAA consider lowering the attendance thresholds for TFRs to include a broader range of major sporting and non-sporting events, and to prohibit non-essential UAS operations during rich events to protect public safety.
V. Discussion of the Proposed Rule (pp. 24659-24702)	FAA discusses detailed requirements around eligibility criteria (§74.54), protective security and Remote ID sensing (§74.56) boundary design (§§74.58-74.60), environmental review (§74.70), externalities (§74.68), and evaluation and reconsideration processes (§74.100).	The City offers several recommendations: 1) Confirm that municipal water and wastewater facilities are fully eligible for UAFRs designation, 2) Clarify Remote ID data retention expectations and consider privacy principles, 3) Ensure that municipal nature preserves and wildlife corridors are recognized during environmental review, and 4) Recognize impacts to emergency response corridors, including air medical and fire department drone operations. 5) Define UAFR lateral boundaries and altitude limits with greater precision to avoid

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Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
		unintentionally encompassing large portions of surrounding communities. 6) Establish a rapid authorization mechanism – similar to Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAAN) – to allow properly credentialed public-safety agencies to conduct time-sensitive operations within UAFRs, supplemented by optional notifications to local authorities to improve situational awareness. 7) Codify explicit emergency exemptions allowing public-safety UAS operations within UAFRs without prior authorization when responding to emergencies, with notification required only as soon as practicable. 8) Incorporate community noise-impact considerations into FAA’s environmental review process to ensure that UAS operations within or near designated UAFRs do not create undue noise disturbances for surrounding neighborhoods.
V. Discussion of the Proposed Rule (p. 24673)	FAA is seeking feedback on the following question: 1. <i>What types of drinking water and wastewater systems should be considered in development of gating criteria?</i>	The City recommends FAA set an expansive set of criteria for which water systems are eligible to apply for a UAFR. A variety of sites including water treatment plants, wastewater treatment facilities, and pumping and storage facilities could benefit from the protection of a UAFR. Water and wastewater facilities may face a variety of threats including: • Contamination: Drone-enabled introduction of contaminants • Operational disruption: Targeting communications or chemical feed systems • Public safety impacts: Disruption to potable water supply affecting large populations
V. Discussion of the Proposed Rule (p. 24673)	FAA is seeking feedback on the following question: 2. <i>What are the characteristics of drinking water and wastewater</i>	The City recommends FAA set an expansive set of criteria for which water systems are eligible to apply for a UAFR.

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Section	Summary of Proposed Rule	Comments/Recommendations
	<i>systems that should be considered in development of gating criteria?</i>	
V. Discussion of the Proposed Rule (p. 24673)	FAA is seeking feedback on the following question: 5. <i>Should a history of unauthorized drone flight over a drinking water or wastewater system be considered in development of gating criteria?</i>	The City recommends FAA not prohibit a water or wastewater facility from seeking a UAFR because of a lack of unauthorized drone flights. Critical infrastructure may be vulnerable to unauthorized UAS activity even without a documented history of flights.

These recommendations support City Council [Resolution No. 20231214-070](#) directing the City to advocate for enhanced drone regulations that strengthen public safety, security, and quality of life.

Conclusion

The City of Austin appreciates FAA's efforts to develop a structured, consistent process to reduce risks posed by unauthorized UAS activity near critical infrastructure. The proposed rule advances safety, aligns with federal and local policy goals, and provides important tools for cities that manage essential public facilities.

As UAS technology becomes increasingly integral to public-safety operations, it is essential that regulatory frameworks balance security with operational practicality. Precision in defining protected areas, streamlined authorization pathways, and clear emergency exemptions will help maintain emergency-response capabilities while supporting compliance and safe integration of UAS into the airspace.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and look forward to continued collaboration as this rulemaking progresses. Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov or 512.923.7577.

Sincerely,



T.C. Broadnax
City Manager
City of Austin

cc: The Honorable Austin Mayor and City Council
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer



August 24, 2026

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Re: City of Austin Comments – Wireless Emergency Alerts; The Emergency Alert System; Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems [PS Docket Nos. 15-91, 15-94, and 25-224]

Submitted via FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) at: <https://fcc.gov/ecfs>

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On behalf of the City of Austin, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s [notice](#) titled *"Wireless Emergency Alerts; The Emergency Alert System; Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems."*

General Comments

The City of Austin is a general-purpose local government spanning three counties (Travis, Williamson, and Hays) that provides comprehensive municipal services to over one million residents, including water, wastewater, electricity, transportation, and public safety.

Last year, the City became a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) alerting authority. Previously, the City relied on coordination with the three counties to issue an IPAWS alert, which could potentially result in unnecessary delays.

Our Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) have already been utilized in local monthly tests as well as a statewide test in April 2026 to ensure their efficacy and raise public awareness of their importance.

Additionally, the City has issued EAS and WEA alerts for two incidents since becoming an IPAWS local alerting authority; a winter storm in January of 2026 and a shooting incident that spanned across much of Austin before moving to a neighboring city.

The City of Austin is also located in a region commonly referred to as 'Flash Flood Alley', known for its tendency to flood quickly. The broader Central Texas region has tragically suffered deadly flash flooding events in recent years. The EAS and WEA systems are an incredibly important tool for the City of Austin to be able to alert our residents of this and other threats in a timely manner. The security of our EAS and WEA systems presents numerous challenges, including the accuracy of geotargeting, character limits for messages, and the need for more precise location information. Evolving cyber

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Subject: City of Austin Comments – Wireless Emergency Alerts; The Emergency Alert System; Modernization of the Nation's Alerting Systems [PS Docket Nos. 15-91, 15-94, and 25-224]

risks means that we must continuously strive to secure our system, which is critical to maintaining public confidence in the system.

The City of Austin supports eliminating the existing exceptions to WEA geotargeting requirements and encourages continued efforts to improve the technical accuracy and reliability of geotargeting. Precise geographic targeting is critical for life safety messaging. Inconsistent or unreliable geotargeting can undermine public confidence and create significant operational challenges when alerting populations. The Commission should ensure that any geotargeting requirements are supported by reliable and consistent technical performance across participating wireless providers.

We also support permitting EAS participants to utilize the more detailed location information available through Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) while preserving flexibility for alert originators and broadcasters. Providing access to enhanced geographic information can improve message relevance and support more effective public warning.

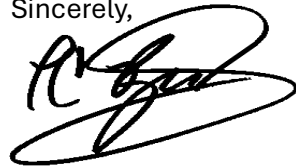
The City of Austin also supports retiring the requirement for a 90-character maximum WEA message on legacy network elements. The 360-character WEA message format has become the operational standard and aligns with modern emergency messaging best practices. Longer messages enable alerting authorities to provide clearer protective actions, reduce ambiguity, and better communicate complex incidents without relying on abbreviated language that may confuse the public.

Lastly, we would support legislation requiring broadcasters to transmit the messages. We have started initial discussions with Texas Broadcasters Association, Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and FEMA to convene a local working group of alerting authorities and broadcasters in the region. Our goal is to build relationships to ensure we better understand each other's capabilities and have dependable processes to ensure alerts are shared with the public. However, we understand there to be no requirement for broadcasters to relay the alerts.

Conclusion

The City appreciates the Commission's opportunity to provide comments in this proceeding. We are available to answer any questions and to help the Commission protect and improve our nation's IPAWS infrastructure. Should you have any questions, please reach out to Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov or 512.923.7577.

Sincerely,

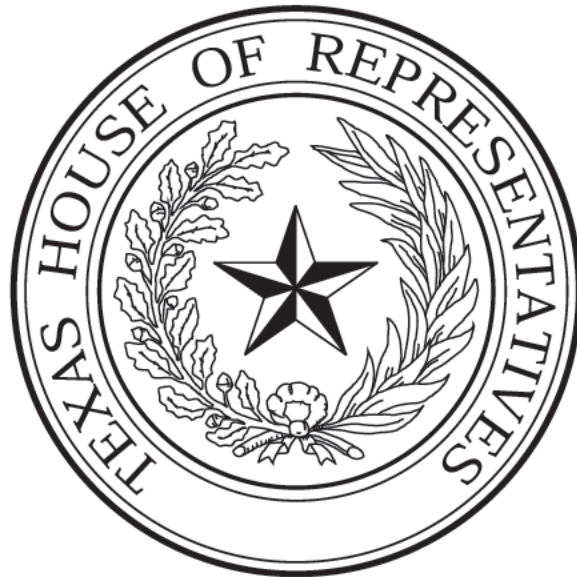


T.C. Broadnax
City Manager
City of Austin

cc: The Honorable Austin Mayor and City Council
Jon Fortune, Austin Deputy City Manager
Jim Redick, Austin Emergency Management
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer

SUPPLEMENTAL INTERIM COMMITTEE CHARGES

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
89TH LEGISLATURE



SPEAKER DUSTIN BURROWS
AUGUST 2026

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Study opportunities to increase preventive efforts and early detection of hormone imbalances, including the provision of baseline reproductive hormone testing.
2. Study the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to treat perimenopause or menopause symptoms and reduce associated risks. Evaluate HRT coverage availability and identify and recommend methods to expand access to physician-prescribed HRT. Review additional access barriers that limit patients' and their doctors' freedom to choose the best course of care.
3. Review ways to reduce administrative barriers for new parents, including automatic insurance enrollment of newborns.
4. Evaluate the benefits of iron and other essential supplements for pregnant women. Identify methods to expand access to supplementation and related testing, and prenatal nutrition.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Healthy Texas Women and related women's health programs and identify ways to enhance services for eligible Texans.
6. Review parental leave policies for state employees. Specifically, consider if additional leave should be permitted when a newborn is admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit.

Attachment D - Congressional Project Funding Status

Member	FY	Project	Amount	Status
Lloyd Doggett	2027	UT-Waller Creek Restoration and Connectivity	\$2,400,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Lloyd Doggett	2027	Open Door Preschool Early Childhood Center – Facility Rehabilitation and Security Upgrades	\$1,150,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Lloyd Doggett	2027	Waterloo Greenway Creek Restoration & Water Quality	\$4,900,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Lloyd Doggett	2027	Foundation Communities' Prosper Center North	\$1,900,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Greg Casar	2027	Montopolis Tributary Trail	\$250,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Greg Casar	2027	Mariposa Family Learning Center	\$2,250,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Greg Casar	2027	Block 16 Urban Renewal District	\$1.250,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Greg Casar	2027	Goodnight Ranch Housing Development	\$500,000	Advanced – Pending Final Selection
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Austin Community Violence Intervention (Resubmitted FY25)	\$1,031,000	Award letter received; application submitted

Attachment D - Congressional Project Funding Status

Member	FY	Project	Amount	Status
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Waterloo Greenway Creek Restoration and Water Quality Improvements (Resubmitted FY25)	\$1,092,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2026	West Bouldin Creek Trail	\$3,500,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Connecting Windsor Park: Belfast Bridge & Trail	\$2,000,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Cool Corridors: Tree Planting and Workforce Development to Reduce Extreme Heat in Austin's Hottest Corridors	\$500,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Emergency Disaster Energy Hubs	\$1,145,144	Award letter received; application submitted
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Sunken Garden Springs Historic Rehabilitation and Environmental Restoration Project (Resubmitted FY25)	\$625,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2026	Foundation Communities/Mary Lee Campus Redevelopment - Lamar Square (Resubmitted FY25)	\$625,000	Award letter received; application pending
Greg Casar	2026	All Abilities Playground – Onion Creek Metro Park	\$3,150,000	Award letter received; application pending
Greg Casar	2026	Esperanza Community Project (Resubmitted FY25)	\$850,000	Award letter received; application pending

Attachment D - Congressional Project Funding Status

Member	FY	Project	Amount	Status
Greg Casar	2026	Persimmon Point (Resubmitted FY25)	\$250,000	Award letter received; application pending
Greg Casar	2026	Sir Swante Palm Park (Resubmitted FY25)	\$850,000	Award letter received; application pending
Lloyd Doggett	2024	Bergstrom Spur Urban Trail West Segment	\$4,116,279	Project is at 90% design, with TxDOT reviews scheduled and a late 2026 construction bid anticipated
Lloyd Doggett	2024	Victims & Survivors of Violent Crime Trauma Recovery Program	\$1,445,000	Funds are currently being drawn down for the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center, with project completion anticipated this fiscal year
Lloyd Doggett	2024	Buttermilk Creek Water Quality Improvement Project	\$959,752	Project is partially reimbursed, with one reimbursement received and a second pending EPA approval; an additional invoice will be submitted later this year.
Greg Casar	2024	Longhorn Dam Multimodal Improvements	\$4,116,279	Advance Funding Agreement with TxDOT is nearing completion; design is underway, public engagement is anticipated in early 2026, and Halff is supporting preliminary drainage and survey work.
Greg Casar	2024	Bergstrom Spur Urban Trail Central Segment	\$500,000	Advance Funding Agreement with TxDOT has been finalized; the City will complete design for the Bergstrom Spur segment under I-35, with construction to be delivered by TxDOT as part of the I-35 project
Greg Casar	2024	John Trevino Metro Park at Morrison Ranch Development	\$1,000,000	Contract has been executed; the project is currently in permitting and is expected to enter the bidding phase next month.
Lloyd Doggett	2023	City of Austin Northern Walnut Creek Trail	\$5,000,000	Advance Funding Agreement with TxDOT has been finalized; Project is on schedule and expected to be approved for bidding by TxDOT in September 2026

Attachment D - Congressional Project Funding Status

Member	FY	Project	Amount	Status
Lloyd Doggett	2023	Austin Public Health's Substance Abuse, Awareness, Education	\$2,000,000	This project has concluded. All contracts were executed, projects completed, and contracts have been closed out. Funds have been drawn down and fully expended.
Lloyd Doggett	2023	Office of Community Violence Intervention Neighborhood Peace Project expansion	\$1,000,000	Funds have been fully expended and the award has been closed.
Lloyd Doggett	2022	Colony Park Water and Wastewater Project	\$1,000,000	Contract is in place and funds are being drawn down.
Lloyd Doggett	2022	I-35 Cap & Stitch Planning Study	\$1,500,000	Funds have been received through a TxDOT reimbursement program; \$174,245.16 of the \$1,666,667 CPF award remains.
Lloyd Doggett	2022	Mokan Trail Project	\$1,000,000	Construction for Phase 5 is underway, with completion anticipated in fall 2026. A ribbon cutting is planned toward the end of the 2026 calendar year.
			\$48,489,175	



Office of Mayor Kirk Watson

301 West Second Street, Austin, TX 78701

July 24, 2026

The Honorable Lois Kolkhorst
Chair, Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chair Kolkhorst:

I want to first thank you again for the years of service you have invested not only in the State of Texas but specifically your tireless efforts to improve public health in Texas. Your leadership in the areas of maternal health, nutrition, and behavioral health have demonstrated your deep commitment to improving the health of all Texans. I also thank you for our years of service and working together in the Texas Senate. I have great memories.

After listening to the testimony at your July 7th Senate Health and Human Services hearing on the mental health and homelessness interim charge, I am both encouraged and frustrated. Following millions of dollars in investment, we know far more than we did when you first started, and we have made significant progress under your leadership. Yet in many ways, we are still far from achieving a comprehensive solution for these complex and elusive challenges that impact every corner of this state – welding the rotors as they whirl.

The wisdom and serendipity of your dual role as Chair of the Sunset Advisory Commission and Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee is not lost on us. At this opportune moment in our respective leadership roles, I wanted to share some thoughts and recommendations on the intersection of local government and the important work of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

Austin has long been a partner with HHSC, DSHS, Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) and many other state agencies. With this in mind, we offer the following comments on Austin priorities, potential statutory changes, and funding recommendations related to or adjacent to HHSC's work.

General Comments

Austin supports a strong state-local partnership that prioritizes prevention, community stability, and efficient delivery of essential health and human services. Continued investment in core public health infrastructure and community-based services will help Texas communities respond to growing behavioral health services, housing, and public health challenges while easing the increasing strain on local healthcare organizations and the emergency healthcare system.

Austin encourages policies that streamline service delivery, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen coordination between state agencies, healthcare providers, and local and regional community partners. Austin also encourages the strengthening of DSHS by transitioning it to an independent department within the State government, with mental health and nursing homes moving from HHSC to DSHS as part of the emergency healthcare system. Texas needs to have a clear and coordinated healthcare service that is better positioned to lead public health strategy, modernize the public health infrastructure, and support Texans' healthcare needs. This level of leadership is critical as local public health departments face significant budget challenges due to substantial cuts in federal funding and ongoing uncertainty related to likely additional cuts in core public health grants.

July 7th Senate Hearing – The “Worried Well,” Super Utilizers and Anosognosia

You and I both know that in most industries, it's easier to focus on the “worried well” — the low-hanging fruit. Our mental health care system faces similar challenges, such as limited funding, bed capacity transparency, and a shortage of qualified clinicians. As a result, many facilities struggle to serve the complex behavioral health and social needs of this highly visible population effectively. In Austin and across Texas, there's often nowhere for them to go. The default disposition for these individuals is either jail or a hospital emergency department, both of which are very expensive options and not the appropriate level of care for the patient. The impact on our healthcare systems is significant and contributes to ER overcrowding, meaning care for others is delayed while the ER bed is occupied sometimes for days before the patient can be dispositioned. More often than not, these patients are seen, stabilized, provided an outpatient referral, and return to the streets to repeat the cycle. Our local healthcare executives, mental health experts, and public safety experts all continuously report negative impact of underinvestment in mental health services, which leads to more costly and less efficacious short-term fixes.

I want to be very clear – the challenge with many of these folks is not that they do not want care – they do not *realize* they need it. This lack of insight into their own debilitation, called anosognosia, is the reason mandated treatment is a critical tool. The state, under the doctrine of *parens patriae*, is compelled to protect individuals who are unable to protect themselves. By protecting these members of our community through mandated treatments, we are better able to protect Texas.

No Wrong Door – System Coordination

Since April 2026, the Austin Police Department is leading a multi-agency coordination effort focused on connecting the top 100 of the estimated 950 highest utilizers in Travis County to services called *No Wrong Door* (attached). A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was developed to ensure appropriate protection of data sharing across agencies, as well as a Release of Information (ROI) form for clients. This effort has confirmed what practitioners have long known and what you heard at your July 7th hearing. There is an absence of enough high-acuity beds and lack of compelled system coordination.

Austin State Hospital

According to Austin State Hospital (ASH), less than half of its patients are from Travis County. ASH patients committed through the county court, even if they hail from another county, would be recorded as a Travis County/Integral Care patient, based on their county of commitment, not their county of residence.

- Patients considered Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity averaged approximately three years' stay before community reintegration.
- Beds are no longer turning over at previous rates of 7-10 days; patients are staying significantly longer, reducing overall availability.

People remain at ASH not due to ongoing clinical need, but because no appropriate community housing options exist for them to transition to. Intermediate step-down supply would have to expand significantly in Travis County or the patient's home county to truly relieve the bottleneck.

Criminal Justice Diversion Programs

In March of this year, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis attended a community meeting at our downtown central library. While there, on another floor, a man stood up from his computer and proceeded to beat to death the man sitting next to him. Chief Davis was summoned to the incident, where she personally arrested the suspect.

This violent offender had approximately a dozen felony offenses, with half of them being dismissed due to prosecutorial discretion following an incompetency finding. He then participated in a diversion program where he spent six months in inpatient care before the incident. Without question, diversion must be handled within a post-adjudication structure, in which a sentence is deferred pending successful completion of an extended mental health program.

Systematically, diversion can help, but it's not foolproof, and success depends largely on a local justice system's ideologies and capacity to strengthen any favorable outcomes, especially among people experiencing homelessness who lack the basic needs to remain stabilized after leaving the structure of diversion.

Transparency, Reporting and Data

Under [26 Texas Administrative Code 306.153](#), Texas funds community-based private psychiatric beds using state general revenue allocated to Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs). If a private psychiatric hospital signs a vendor contract with an LMHA to accept these state-funded patients, they must report bed utilization and capacity directly to that specific LMHA. A universal real-time reporting platform for bed availability exists, but is not operationally being used between hospitals, LMHAs and psychiatric hospitals. Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) already use a statewide, real-time bed availability reporting platform, called *EMResource* for hospitals and could serve as the platform to expand reporting on in-patient psychiatric facilities. *EMResource* already has in-patient psychiatric reporting capability used by acute care hospitals. By amending Texas Health and Safety Code [Sections 773.112](#) and [773.114](#) of the Texas Health and Safety Code to leverage existing RAC reporting infrastructure to include inpatient psychiatric and behavioral health bed availability, Texas can better address the primary stopgaps that stall healthcare legislation: cost to taxpayers and administrative burden on staff. DSHS' *EMResource* can update emergency department status, facility statuses, including diversion, and physical bed counts, and can bypass the need to develop a new system. This same system was used during the pandemic for daily COVID bed reporting and is optimal for local psychiatric bed reporting needs.

We understand that the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grant largely funds the RAC is one of the grants that is at risk of being decreased or eliminated at the Federal level. We recommend appropriating these funds to DSHS and task the RACs to develop a mental health system of care,

like they have successfully done for trauma, stroke, and are concurrently developing for perinatal care systems. DSHS also identified in their self-evaluation the need for a disaster fund similar to Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) for disaster response given the often years delay in FEMS reimbursement.

Substance Use Disorders

More than 30 years ago, there was a shift in thinking within the substance abuse field that promoted the idea that only voluntary treatment was effective. This prompted many psychiatric facilities and psychiatrists to abandon involuntary options despite the existing legal framework at the time. Drug courts emerged as a response to the gaps in purely voluntary approaches and turned out to be effective through judicial authority compelling someone toward sobriety.

San Antonio has successfully piloted chemical dependency commitments, producing strong outcomes in programs starting with medical detox, moving to inpatient rehab, and leading to sober living. Structured treatment through Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) was also very successful when paired as *court-ordered* treatment. The pilots began by approaching people who were repeatedly entering and leaving rehab voluntarily, asking whether they would be open to a program they could not leave early from. People responded positively, and the initial cohort comprised people who were voluntarily willing to be committed.

The legal bar for a chemical dependency commitment in San Antonio-Bexar County is lower than for a standard Peace Officer Emergency Detention (POED), as it only requires a finding that the person's substance use makes it foreseeable (not necessarily imminent) that harm will occur to themselves. For people using methamphetamine, opiates, or large quantities of alcohol, meeting this criterion was relatively straightforward clinically. Inpatient commitment can last up to 90 days, can be converted to outpatient status for up to one year, and modification between inpatient and outpatient status is permitted; this function would be transformative in Austin-Travis County.

Pilot participants would be near the end of their 90-day inpatient commitment in excellent condition, presenting themselves as sober, engaged, and voluntarily wanting to continue treatment. Attorneys, however, found it difficult to justify keeping them on involuntary commitment when they appeared mentally competent and were willingly participating. In nearly every case, once taken off commitment, clients relapsed within approximately two weeks.

Funding has been identified as the single largest barrier to ongoing success, as the local LMHA has cited policy that only covers chemical dependency treatment when it is part of treating a crisis resulting from a mental illness. This means that law enforcement must wait for someone to medically deteriorate to the extent of being a danger to self or others before they can intervene again, as chemical dependency treatment is not funded as a standalone service once a mental health crisis is stabilized. Even then, intervention on AOT requires that a motion be filed first, followed by a court hearing to convince a judge that someone meets a high legal threshold.

Using chemical dependency warrants in metropolitan areas like Austin-Travis County promotes continuity of care through a preplanned process where officers leverage relationships with clients to pre-fill the warrant and complete acute portions after a live assessment confirmed the individual meets the criteria. The chemical dependency warrant could then be converted to a full chemical

dependency commitment, whereas starting with a POED doesn't sufficiently specify the chemical dependency component as the primary purpose for care continuity.

Travis County has not used any type of mental health warrant since 1989, when the then-probate court judge first decided to discontinue them. However, APD and the County Attorney's office are encouraged by the concept of involuntary chemical dependency commitment (in tandem with Assisted Outpatient Treatment) to sustain involuntary clinical treatment as a specialized alternative for substance use disorders.

Peace Officer Emergency Detention (POED)

Chapter 573 of the Health and Safety Code only authorizes peace officers to detain an individual for psychiatric evaluation. Published medical evidence has identified that this approach leads to a high percentage of individuals being detained inappropriately as evidenced by the discontinuation of the order following psychiatric evaluation. The evidence also identifies that clinicians are more qualified at identifying individuals who are in need of a "hold" for psychiatric evaluation.

A Meadows Institute evaluation in Austin identified the top locations for a POED response by the Austin Police Department as either a hospital emergency department or a psychiatric facility, largely to issue these orders on individuals who have already been evaluated by a physician who has determined the need. This approach wastes valuable law enforcement resources that are better utilized responding to emergencies in the community. The utilization of peace officers as the sole professional who can make the determination of the need to hold an individual, also means that it is likely a large percentage of the individuals detained are done so inappropriately. These issues are particularly impactful in rural communities who have limited law enforcement and EMS resources and often long transport times to move the individual to a location for appropriate assessment.

Recommended Statutory Changes

The combination of challenges outlined above – nowhere to go and no warm hand-offs between service points – informs the following:

- Amend [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 241](#) to address exclusionary criteria for hospitals by removing policies that deny or restrict care to people due to specific disabilities or a related condition.
- Amend [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 573](#) code and create a subsection to allow physicians and their delegates the ability to issue a hold order for psychiatric evaluation to defer medically acute cases to health professionals.
- Amend Texas Health and Safety Code [Sections 773.112](#) and [773.114](#) to leverage the existing RAC reporting platform to include inpatient psychiatric and behavioral health bed capacity with required reporting every four hours of all facilities with in-patient psychiatric beds.
- Amend [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 574](#) to reduce State legal threshold for involuntary psychiatric intervention for participants under Assisted Outpatient Treatment demonstrating clear evidence of clinical deterioration/substantial likelihood of treatment nonadherence.
- Amend [Texas Health and Safe Code Chapter 573](#) to require coordinated discharge between local entities for transportation, follow-up medication and care, including contingencies for nonadherence.
- Amend [Texas Government Code Chapter 531](#) and [Texas Occupations Code § 1701.404](#) to implement and fund Crisis Worker Certification as required training for staff on Mobile Crisis

Outreach Teams (MCOT) and Receiving Centers in Texas to work in the state's crisis continuum for MCOT field deployment and warrantless emergency detention triage, and establish standardized statewide requirements.

- Amend [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 462](#) to require mandatory participation by residential substance use rehabilitative facilities to sustain involuntary clinical treatment for substance use disorders through chemical dependency commitments.
- Amend [Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 614](#) to authorize data sharing for efficient service coordination by authorizing reasonable information exchange between public agencies for people in recidivism to enable coordinated resource navigation for Individualized Service Plans.

Recommended Administrative Changes

- Amend [Chapter 25 Texas Administrative Code 133](#) to address exclusionary criteria for hospitals by removing policies that deny or restrict care to people due to specific disabilities or a related condition.
- Amend [Chapter 25 Texas Administrative Code 157.123](#) to require Texas RACs to include inpatient psychiatric and behavioral health bed capacity and funds RACs to develop a mental health system of care, as a component of the emergency healthcare system
- Amend [Chapter 26 Texas Administrative Code 306.201](#) to require transportation, follow-up medication and care, including contingencies for nonadherence.
- Review disability determinations and claims, which currently take a minimum of 275 days for an initial decision. Appeals and reconsideration requests can take two years or longer to resolve. While federal funding constraints may limit the agency's capacity, the review could evaluate potential efficiencies, including streamlined intake requirements, improved case triage, process and staff support, quality review, and the use of AI-enabled tools.

Funding Considerations

- Fund statute changes recommended in Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 573 and Chapter 574.
- Fund a Central Texas mental health crisis center for complex co-occurring cases. Specifically, invest in a mental health care continuum that builds out a holistic crisis response through alternatives to incarceration, additional residential capacity to bridge the gap between acute crisis and independent living, and step-down services for all: *no wrong door*.
- Fund intensive outpatient services that are community-based to preserve jail capacity and reduce pressure on local emergency response systems.
- Provide additional funding to DSHS to solidify funding for the RACs to support the enhancement of the *EMResource* platform, create regional tele-psychiatry resources for consultation services, and create regional navigation for patient care and placement support for first responders and critical access hospitals.
- Seek a federal IMD Medicaid Exclusion Waiver to increase access to inpatient treatment for adults with severe mental illness and allow for expansion of step-down residential treatment.
- Create a Disaster Contingency Account similar to Account 453 that may be utilized by DSHS who has responsibility for the medical care and public health component of disaster response. This will strengthen the ability of DSHS to deploy Emergency Medical Task Force

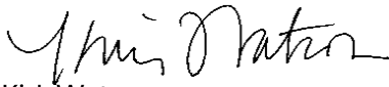
(EMTF), through the lead RACs, resources during emergencies. These teams have been critical in the responses to rural communities who have been impacted by natural and manmade disasters.

Closing

Appended to this memorandum are additional suggestions relating to the work of HHSC.

Again, I appreciate your leadership and I am grateful to have you in this role at this moment in time. We also value our HHSC partnership approach with local governments and community providers. We stand ready to support collaborative solutions that improve health outcomes, strengthen prevention efforts, reduce recidivism, and expand access to essential services for Texans. Call on me. You may also visit with Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer, at carrie.rogers@austintexas.gov.

Sincerely,



Kirk Watson
Mayor

Cc: Members of the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
Sadie Smeck, Policy Analyst, Sunset Advisory Commission
Lyle Blanco, Policy Analyst, Sunset Advisory Commission
T.C. Broadnax, Austin City Manager
Lisa Davis, Austin Police Chief
Maris Herold, Austin Police Department, Chief of Strategic Initiatives
Dr. Mark Escott, Austin Chief Medical Officer
David Gray, Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations Director
Robert Luckritz, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services Chief
Carrie Rogers, Austin Government Relations Officer
Adrienne Sturup, Austin Public Health Director

Encl: Attachment A – Additional HHSC Sunset Recommendations
Attachment B – Austin-Travis County *No Wrong Door* Program Overview

Attachment A – Additional HHSC Sunset Recommendations

Program	Recommendations
Public Health Provider Charity Care Program	Oppose Charity Care pool reductions that support uncompensated care delivery. Support long-term sustainability planning prior to 2030.
Aging Adults	Expand availability and accessibility of services for aging adults and caregiver support. Ensure facility regulation oversight and QA mechanisms.
Community Health Workers	Expand Community Health Workers reimbursements for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. If not reimbursable, consider prioritizing preventive and community-based care models. Implement statewide workforce development strategies.
Infectious Disease Prevention	Support local public health preparedness and rapid outbreak response capacity. Maintain needed disease surveillance for identification and response to public health threats.
Data	Strengthen interoperability between state and local systems. Continue investment in public health data modernization initiatives.
Funding and Grants	Continue efforts to reduce administrative burden for local health departments. Maintain flexible grant structures for community specific needs. Ensure continuity of funding for proven public health and human service programs. Fund chemical dependency treatment, as it is not funded as a standalone service.
Local Mental Health Authorities	Strengthen coordination between LMHAs and local public health systems. Fund and support crisis response services and behavioral health continuity of care. Expand access to integrated behavioral health and substance use services.
Public health infrastructure and effective health and safety policies	Support sustainable DSHS public health data systems and disease surveillance. Support sustainable State laboratory capacity and public health emergency preparedness infrastructure. Support sustainable local disease prevention infrastructure, outbreak, preparedness, and access to preventive public health services. Support sustainable food safety policies and inspection frameworks that protect public health, support consumer confidence, and promote efficient coordination with local business.
Continuum of care, prevention services and access to basic needs for at-risk Texans	Strengthen behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disability (IDD), crisis response, and substance use services, including Sobering Center operations and crisis care. Support FYI Vouchers and housing stability supports. Support public health infrastructure, HIV/STI prevention services, disease surveillance and public health emergency preparedness. Expand food access (WIC/SNAP), maternal and child health services, early childhood supports and affordable childcare access. Support senior, disability, and vulnerable population services.
Disability determinations and claims	Review the disability determination and claims process to identify potential efficiencies, including streamlined intake requirements, improved case triage, process and staff support, quality review, and the use of AI-enabled tools.

No Wrong Door

Coordinated Crisis Response Across Public Safety, Mental Health, & Homelessness

Unprecedented local need

Many people with complex social and behavioral health needs cycle through a fragmented emergency response system, across law enforcement, emergency medical care, the criminal justice system, emergency health systems, and community service providers.

High system utilizers (APD data 2021-'25)



Justice-involved clients (2023)



- **High system utilizers without sustained care** cost taxpayers \$137 million annually for at least 950 people across Travis County hospitals, emergency rooms, police services, and jail.
- **Integral Care's** psychiatric crisis stabilization beds cost \$776 per day on average, and the Extended Observation Unit up to \$2,283 per day.
- **Austin State Hospital's** daily average fee is \$917 for adult inpatient services.

Ongoing efforts & service gaps

Austin-Travis County is advancing its regional response through specialized interlocal initiatives, including deflection efforts addressing public safety, mental health, and homelessness. Although services are available across the community, **demand continues to increase** due to the number and complexity of cases, while minimal bed availability creates additional pressure.

Immediate crisis care for complex co-occurring cases remains one of the most acute gaps in the Austin-Travis County continuum of care. Long-term treatment options for significant and chronic substance use and mental health conditions are scarce, often leading to discharge to the street with only a short-term fix and no sustained care plan. Intermediate, step-down residential capacity is just as important for ongoing care.

Central Health, Travis County's hospital district, and Integral Care, the Local Mental Health Authority, are adding beds and expanding capacity, but **state support is crucial**.

No Wrong Door

Coordinated Crisis Response Across Public Safety, Mental Health, & Homelessness

System-wide needs

Available resources have not kept pace with accelerating demand for appropriate service capacity that is both accessible and available. People who most frequently use emergency response systems require **more personalized, ongoing behavioral health care** than the general population in need of mental health services. Meeting that need **requires specialized capacity** beyond conventional housing and homelessness services, and it is also where the crisis-care gap is most apparent.

This means **additional inpatient beds** for psychiatric, substance use disorder treatment, and extended observation as well as a **24/7 dedicated, single-point, no-refusal receiving option** for law enforcement, first responders, and walk-in referrals.

Legislative considerations

01

Fund a mental health crisis care center for complex co-occurring cases

Invest in a mental health care continuum that builds out a holistic crisis response through alternatives to incarceration including intensive outpatient services, additional residential capacity to bridge the gap between acute crisis, and independent living, and step-down services for all.

02

Expand warrantless emergency detention authority beyond peace officers

Authorize trained mental health professionals, such as physicians, nurses, and clinicians, to initiate warrantless detention for local law enforcement to defer medically acute cases to health professionals and focus on public safety responsibilities.

03

IMD Medicaid Waiver to allow expansion of step-down residential treatment

A Section 1115 Waiver allows treatment for patients with co-occurring conditions in a step-down residential facility, alleviates the bottleneck in the mental health system of care, and is significantly more affordable than patients cycling through expensive, uncompensated ER visits and county jails.

04

Remove exclusionary criteria for hospitals

Remove policies that deny or restrict care to people due to specific disabilities or a related condition.

05

Track regional inpatient psychiatric & behavioral health bed availability

Amend Texas Health and Safety Code (Sections 773.112 & 773.114) to leverage existing RAC reporting infrastructure to include inpatient psychiatric and behavioral health bed capacity.