



**AIA**  
Austin

January 25, 2021

United States Senate  
United States House of Representatives

**Re: Build More Housing Near Transit Act**

Dear Members of Congress,

Austin, Texas, like many cities in the United States, is currently facing an affordable housing crisis. This is not only due to housing demand outpacing supply, but also a result of the lack of housing in walkable, transit-oriented areas. Consequently, many Austinites are forced to find homes in outlying suburbs and drive single-occupancy vehicles to the urban core for work every day. This way of life is a large cost burden to families and exacerbates the climate issues we are facing due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

This is an opportune time for Austin to address this issue, however, as last November voters approved a ballot measure to invest billions of dollars to expand our existing public transit system. It is our hope that Austin will receive matching federal funds to make this ambitious transit plan a reality—a plan that includes an evaluation of how housing can be developed around the newly created transit lines to create more affordable options for families, increase economic opportunities, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Strategically locating housing options near the transit lines will also ensure a base level of ridership. Since it has been proven that transit investment can accelerate gentrification in the surrounding service areas, it is important that all plans identify these potential risks and develop strategies that mitigate displacement, ensure equity and sustainability, and maximize community benefit. This includes designating a portion of the planned housing to be affordable for low-income families.

To this end, AIA Austin supports the proposed Build More Housing Near Transit Act to change Title 49 U.S. Code § 5309 to prioritize planned transit projects that include holistic evaluations for developing housing along future transit lines.

Sincerely,

Stephi Motal, AIA  
AIA Austin President