

## Bob Gregory

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**Subject:** Single Use Bag Ban and Recycling of Plastic Bags and Films

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

About two years ago, when I first presented my “Bag the Bag” idea to the mayor’s plastic bag task force, I wondered why the city staff did not embrace their opportunity to increase the recycling of such materials through their curbside recycling program. After all, I thought it would be right in line with the City’s Zero Waste goals, to recycle large quantities of plastic bags and potentially plastic films in a “Bag the Bag” program through single stream collection. It seems even more strange now to hear of Bob Gedert’s statements reported in the media this past week that such a recycling program would be inconsistent with the intent of “Zero Waste,” and that the TDS program would neglect 200,000 residents and businesses that do not receive service from his department, Austin Resource Recovery.

It may matter to you to know that TDS intends to offer this program, and other similar expansions of what TDS processes through its MRF, to the more than 30 municipal contracts around Austin and the nearly 4,000 commercial and multi-family accounts within and around Austin, which TDS now services. Since the City does not service these accounts, the City’s Bag Ban would not apply to them, in any event.

To be clear, TDS is re-proposing this program to the City of Austin now to offer an alternative to the Bag Ban and so the City can further expand its landfill disposal diversion efforts. It will also offer the City a method to allow residents to stuff plastics into stuff-bags for placement in their single stream carts, and to provide a means to recycle reusable bags. Whether the City of Austin chooses to participate in this program or not, TDS intends to make it available to its many other customers, because both the single use and the reusable bags create major problems for MRFs when individually tossed in the recyclables.

So, if the city staff’s focus is on the City collecting a fee, then you should make your decision on the merits of revenue production. However, if and when the decision becomes about the serious promotion of recycling and educating the public about responsible solid waste management, please consider the merits of a “Bag the Bag” program to collect these materials through the City’s single stream collection service, either in the form of:

- 1) Just single use plastic bags clearly identified as either high or low density polyethylene;
- 2) Just reusable plastic and cloth bags;
- 3) A combination of the materials in numbers 1 and 2 above; or
- 4) All plastic and cloth bags and plastic film packaging.

In any event, I suggest the City needs a recycling program for reusable plastic bags in order to protect the MRF equipment.

I will not be able to attend the Thursday public meeting, but I welcome the opportunity to work with the City on a solution to this problem. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present my opinions.

Sincerely,

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