



American Planning Association  
**Texas Chapter**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

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Thank you, Chairman Ken King, for the opportunity to present the following information from the American Planning Association - Texas Chapter. My name is **Chance Sparks**, and I represent the American Planning Association - Texas Chapter, and we are testifying **in favor of HB 4499**. The Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APATX) represents public and private sector planners, planning academics and students, elected officials, and citizen planners in the great state of Texas.

The global pandemic has underscored that close-to-home outdoor recreational opportunities, like parks and trails, are essential to our civic infrastructure and our community's overall quality of life. This is not surprising considering that trails are always at the top, or the top-most expressed public "want" during long-range planning conversations across the state. Our Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP), administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, also identifies that trails are the top missing outdoor recreational opportunity in five of the six regions across the state.

Thinking towards our future, a regionally connected trail system offers numerous benefits for Texans, including improved health and social connectedness, environmental awareness, connectivity, and economic prosperity. This bill will help to identify the feasibility of establishing a regional connected trails system throughout the state, including potential projects, allocation of state resources potentially needed, and departmental capacity to oversee such a program.

This is the type of planning effort which sets the foundation for action. APATX supports this bill and would be interested in being a continued partner in the success of its implementation.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chance Sparks'.

**Chance Sparks, AICP, President**  
**American Planning Association - Texas Chapter**