



COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Date: May 26, 2016

Agenda Item #: 5

Agenda Item: Briefing and discussion regarding the Austin Community Climate Plan.

Vote No vote was taken.

Sponsors/Department: Office of Sustainability

Presenters: Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer, Office of Sustainability, Zach Baumer, Climate Protection Manager, Office of Sustainability.

Summary of Discussion

- Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer with the Office of Sustainability, gave an update on the Austin Community Climate Plan. The Plan was triggered by Council Resolution 20140410-024, which set the net-zero goal for community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- Zach Baumer, Climate Program Manager, Office of Sustainability further explained that in order to meet this goal, emissions from the transportation and land use, electricity and natural gas, waste, and industrial sector are all going to have to be reduced dramatically over the next 35 years.
- The ACCP's next interim target is for 2020, which aims to reduce community-wide emissions to 11.3 million metric tons. These reductions are feasible given that technologies will keep advancing over 35 years.
- The ACCP incorporates and builds on existing plans, namely the Imagine Austin, the Bicycle Master Plan, the Urban Trials Master Plan, the CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, the Austin Energy Resource Generation and Climate Protection Plan, and the Austin Resource Recovery Master Plan.
- Phase 1 of the Plan includes 58 actions that are slated to be completed in the next 5 years. Phase 2 and Phase 3 will be implemented from 2020 – 2030 and 2030 – 2050, respectively. Phase 1 includes actions that are realistic and cost-effective now, while Phase 3 includes actions that are more long-term and more visionary-type actions.

- Mr. Baumer introduced the Community Inventory portion of the Plan, which is updated every 3 years. In 2013, the Austin area produced 13.7 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses. This seems like a lot, but between 2010 and 2013, the Austin-area population increased by approximately 16%, but emissions were reduced by approximately 2%. This is a good indication that the actions being taken are working to reduce emissions on a per capita basis.
- Mr. Baumer also explained that the Implementation Plan was developed over the past year to make sure that the actions in the plan are actually implemented. The plan serves to enhance accountability and transparency to stakeholders, clarify the roles and responsibilities of various City departments, and create a well-defined set of requirements for potential actions to make sure that they are being tracked and implemented.
- The Implementation Plan shows that out of the 58 Phase 1 actions, all but 3 are in development (e.g. not fully funded and operational) or ongoing within the departments' work. Those 3 remaining actions are all actions that are not projected to create large reductions in the near future.
- The Implementation Plan also identified 13 actions that need additional focus. These are actions that have large potential impacts to greenhouse emissions, but are not being fully implemented at present.
- The Office of Sustainability is in the process of developing a Public Engagement Plan as well. Part of this strategy has already been implemented through the Sustainability Blog, which highlights and celebrates the efforts of individual Austin residents to reduce their own personal carbon footprint.
- Chair Pool asked whether the Office of Sustainability calculated the proportional impact on greenhouse gasses for each action. Mr. Baumer replied that the accuracy of the estimates for metric tons reduced depends on the action. Some can be calculated very accurately, while others are much more difficult to quantify. That is part of the reason that the more general low, medium, and high metrics were used instead of specific quantities. Mr. Baumer went on to explain that the "low" classification means approximately single thousands of metric tons of emissions, while "medium" means ten to hundreds of thousands of metric tons, while "high" reflects those actions that have the largest impacts.

Speakers

None.

Direction

None.

Recommendation

There was no recommendation to the full Council.