



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer
Zach Baumer, Climate Program Manager

THRU: Jason Alexander, Chief of Staff

DATE: February 9, 2022

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 20210930-110 (Austin Climate Equity Plan Implementation) – Staff Update

Background

On September 30, 2021, the Austin City Council adopted [Resolution No. 20210930-110](#), affirming its commitment to equitably achieving net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. The resolution called for updates on ongoing and new efforts, including:

- Leadership responsibilities over the implementation of the Climate Equity Plan
- Updating the bylaws of the Joint Sustainability Committee to add new members
- A publicly accessible dashboard to track plan implementation
- The Community Climate Ambassadors Program
- Community engagement efforts
- Plan recommendations that can be completed without a mid-year budget amendment
- Exploration of opportunities for further electrifying operations at the Austin Airport

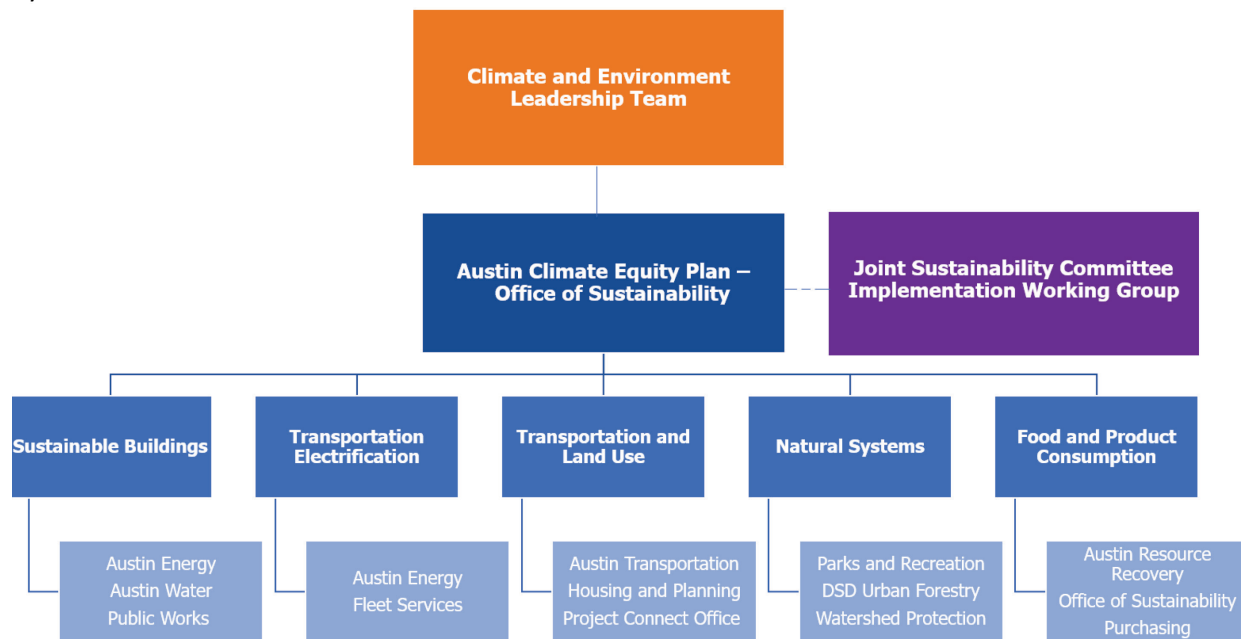
This memorandum also includes a status update on key items that have been initiated since the plan's adoption.

Leadership Responsibilities and Joint Sustainability Committee

Climate and Environment Leadership Team. The interdepartmental Climate and Environment Leadership Team has been, and will continue to be, responsible for overseeing the plan and establishing accountability in implementation. This cross-departmental team, which includes leadership from all climate-adjacent departments, meets every other month or as needed to discuss implementation progress. The team consists of Assistant City Managers, Chief of Staff, Directors, Assistant Directors, and Officers. This group serves as a key strategy team to overcome institutional barriers and ensure a collaborative and effective effort across the City organization.

Joint Sustainability Committee – Implementation Working Group. Following the Council resolution, the Joint Sustainability Committee (JSC) voted on December 6, 2021, to amend its bylaws to include five additional Mayor-appointed members while considering racial diversity. Additionally, the committee voted to create an Austin Climate Equity Plan Implementation Working Group, which will include up to six members of the JSC, and up to fifteen members of the public. This group will meet twice a month, beginning in early February. Recruiting for this group is ongoing and will be done in collaboration with community and departmental stakeholders. The Office of Sustainability will collaborate with the JSC and other departmental and community stakeholders to prioritize individuals who can meaningfully apply an equity lens to this work.

The diagram below provides a snapshot of oversight and implementation roles associated with the Climate Equity Plan.



Publicly Accessible Dashboard

The Office of Sustainability is in the process of creating a public dashboard to track metrics associated with the Austin Climate Equity Plan using Socrata, which is the tool currently used for tracking Strategic Direction 2023 metrics. The new dashboard will include quantitative data on all 17 goals for 2030 and provide information on the status, schedule, tasks, and budget associated with the plan's 74 core strategies and four overarching strategies.

Community Engagement Efforts

Community Climate Ambassadors. The Office of Sustainability recently hired a temporary Climate Equity Engagement Associate to oversee the development of Phase Two of the [Community Climate Ambassadors](#) program and create an equitable community engagement strategy for plan implementation. The new Climate Equity Engagement Associate will develop a targeted recruitment plan in the coming months. The plan's engagement strategy will be informed by community priorities identified during the planning process and will include ways to support community-led initiatives. The Office of Sustainability will coordinate with other departments to ensure collaboration and complementary efforts.

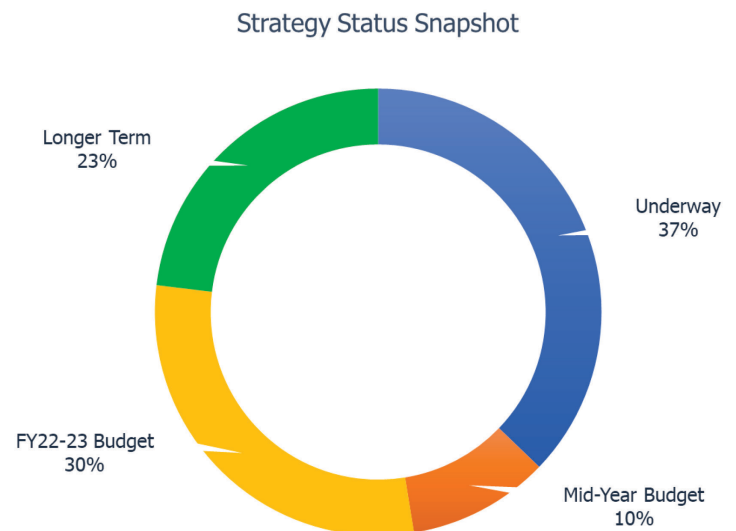
Austin Youth Climate Equity Council. In late fall of 2021, the Office of Sustainability partnered with local nonprofit [EcoRise](#) to develop an [Austin Climate Equity Youth Council](#) to engage high school youth as leaders in climate action. The Youth Climate Council is a collaboration that includes UT Austin's Planet Texas 2050 and the Austin Independent School District (AISD). Twenty local youth from nine Austin-area high schools were

selected to participate in the cohort. Students will learn from environmental justice advocates and City staff, analyze opportunities for campus projects, and develop climate action recommendations. The program will continue through May 2022.

StoryMap. To bring the Climate Equity Plan to life, the Office of Sustainability created a [StoryMap](#) using ArcGIS technology to tell the story of the plan's creation, including photographs and testimonial quotes from individuals who helped shape the plan. The StoryMap is geared toward audiences that are new to the topic of climate change and climate planning. It will be featured on the City's website and shared across social media channels.

Plan Strategies Progress Update

Office of Sustainability staff met with departmental stakeholders to review the status of the plan's four overarching strategies and 74 focus area strategies. Strategies were then categorized based on budget and resource needs. Over one-third of strategies are considered "Underway" and are ongoing with no budgetary implications. Strategies labeled "Mid-Year Budget" in the graphic have a detailed work plan and are ready for implementation if funding should become available. Approximately one-third of strategies require more detailed work plan development and will be part of each Department's internal budget discussions for the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY22-23) budget year. The remaining one-fourth of strategies labeled "Longer Term" are more complex, needing more time to consider available technologies and resources required. These goals will take longer to get underway but are still anticipated to be underway or completed by 2025.



Sustainable Buildings

Most strategies are being assessed for potential FY22-23 budget needs to begin implementation. The rest are underway with no additional budget implications at this time. Examples of strategies that may be dependent on additional capacity include reducing refrigerant leakage and reducing the embodied carbon of building materials. Efforts already underway include:

- A multi-departmental effort to evaluate net-zero energy construction for City buildings and explore using lower carbon concrete for City-owned facilities and infrastructure.
- Community Ambassador-led engagement efforts at Austin Energy and Austin Water:
 - Austin Energy will be recruiting community engagement staff and community members to help with evaluating and informing future code, programmatic, and educational considerations related to advancing electric-ready and electric vehicle (EV)-ready buildings, efficient water and space heating, updating the AE Green Building rating system, and improving other programs served by the Customer Energy Solutions department.
 - Austin Water is undergoing a recruitment process for Community Ambassadors that will help develop an equity tool for ongoing and future Water Forward revision processes and is also evaluating how to improve equitable implementation of its water conservation programs.
- Austin Water continues to evaluate the potential expansion of rebate programs for water conservation and is taking steps to reduce energy use in their building facilities and operations.

Transportation and Land Use

The [Austin Strategic Mobility Plan](#) (ASMP) and the [Strategic Housing Blueprint](#) include multiple actions in alignment with the Climate Equity Plan. Together, these initiatives will transform our land use and transportation for the foreseeable future.

- Several policies and action items in the ASMP reflect strategies outlined in the Climate Equity Plan, including creating an equity mapping tool to analyze the equity of Austin Transportation Department (ATD) programs, project implementation, funding allocation, and engagement. This tool could be used alongside the development and implementation of ATD's mobility hubs program to provide diverse amenities and family-friendly adjacent spaces. It can also be used for project prioritization to ensure systematically excluded areas are prioritized for new bicycle infrastructure.
- In collaboration with community members, City staff created an [Equity Tool](#) and [map series](#) to guide the use of Project Connect anti-displacement funding to benefit people most at risk of displacement from transit investments.

As attachments to the [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#), the Strategic Mobility Plan and Strategic Housing Blueprint will provide an assessment of overall progress as Imagine Austin approaches year ten of implementation.

Transportation Electrification

Nine of the 14 transportation electrification strategies in the plan are currently underway, and three more will be ready for consideration for inclusion in the FY22-23 budget. Efforts underway to electrify public sector fleets include:

- Transition of the City's municipal fleet and Capital Metro's bus fleet to electric, including a Fleet and Public Infrastructure Pilot Tariff that was established to promote and encourage fleet adoption.
- Creation of a low-cost, accessible charging station network with over 1,200 Level 2 ports and 30 DC fast-charging stations under Austin Energy's Plug-In Everywhere Network. Incentives for this network, plus residential and multifamily incentives, include a tiered rebate structure.
- EV-readiness as addressed by Austin Energy includes promoting adoption and minimizing costs through measures in the Green Building and EV programs. Austin Energy will also seek input on policies, programs, and educational measures supporting EV-readiness through a stakeholder engagement process kicking off in February.
- Regional collaboration and support for EV adoption are both well underway through multiple partnerships with TxETRA (Texas Electric Transportation Resource Alliance) and the TxPPC (Texas Public Power Association) EV working group. Outreach to engage historically underserved communities is underway, including Austin Energy's EVs for Everyone program, EVs for Schools program, multifamily outreach and support, e-bike demos, and program management from a dedicated EV Equity Lead.

Natural Systems

Four natural systems strategies are currently underway, many of which require significant cross-departmental collaboration.

- Discussions are being held across several City departments regarding land acquisition. The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) is exploring innovative ways to fund projects that manage natural lands, while the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) is developing a land management plan to lay the groundwork for actively restoring and managing approximately 10,000 acres of natural lands.
- Cross-departmental collaboration is ongoing regarding the management of public lands for ecosystem services, carbon neutrality, and community benefits. This includes PARC's Land Stewardship Pilot Program and [Community PARKnerships Program](#).
- PARC is developing a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program to address language and accessibility considerations and promote positive perceptions of public land.

- WPD, PARD, and Development Services Department (DSD) Forestry are exploring scaling up existing tree planting programs, such as WPD's [Ready, Set, Plant! Program](#) in partnership with nonprofit [TreeFolks](#). DSD Forestry has taken steps toward a 'no net loss' policy for tree canopy on public lands. DSD is also partnering with PARD to fund substantial tree plantings associated with capital improvement projects on parkland.
- The Office of Sustainability is analyzing local food landscapes, including exploring strategies to support regenerative agriculture and carbon-related soil programs.

Food and Product Consumption

The food we eat and the products we use are integral to personal and cultural identity. They are also deeply entrenched in the global supply chain, making them subject to systemic mechanisms spanning far beyond the boundaries and control of the City of Austin. For these reasons, many of the food and product consumption strategies are likely to rely on new resources and external partnerships to be fully implemented.

- The Office of Sustainability is currently updating the State of the Food System report, which will provide the essential underpinning to a comprehensive Austin Food System Plan. This work will incorporate food-related strategies described in the plan and may require additional staffing.
- Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) anticipates releasing a Waste Diversion Study in the spring of 2022, which will measure progress towards waste-reduction targets. ARR is also updating its existing Comprehensive Plan and aims to create alignment with the goals of the Climate Equity Plan.
- Many of the goals related to circular and shared economies are long-term, capital-intensive efforts. Staff has already begun promoting waste reduction and reuse, expanding language access options for [Fix-it Austin programs](#), and hired an AmeriCorps VISTA team member to increase repair education services in low-income communities and communities of color. Other active waste-reduction and reuse programs include the [Give a Great Story](#) campaign and the [Austin Reuse Directory](#).

Overarching Strategies

There are four overarching strategies that support the community-wide net-zero goal and help advance equity.

- ***Green jobs and entrepreneurship***
 - PARD is leading a multi-department effort to ramp up the [Austin Civilian Conservation Corps](#) program, which centers racial equity, provides pathways to green jobs, and promotes community stewardship of public lands. The program aims to equitably expand access to local green jobs.
- ***Prioritize local community initiatives***
 - The Office of Sustainability will ensure that future engagement planning and Community Climate Ambassadors work supports local community initiatives.
- ***Regional collaboration***
 - The Office of Sustainability has held preliminary conversations with local universities and environmental nonprofits to discuss regional collaboration and will build a work plan to understand the most effective path forward. In addition, Office of Sustainability staff has been participating in a year-long Texas cohort program, facilitated by the Rocky Mountain Institute, to share and learn collaboratively with other Texas cities, specifically on resilience hubs and fleet electrification.
- ***Local carbon reduction projects, carbon dioxide removal, and carbon offsets***
 - City staff is exploring a cross-departmental initiative to research, analyze, and compare options for carbon reduction and removal. Staff is also exploring using the Interlocal Agreement between the City and the University of Texas at Austin for advancing research opportunities.

Electrification at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport

The resolution directed the City Manager to pursue strategies for further electrifying Austin's airport parking infrastructure and Airline Ground Service Equipment (GSE), and develop a stakeholder plan to reduce the airport's operational emissions.

At Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS), recent projects with charging infrastructure include parking garages, surface lots, temporary cell phone lots, and support buildings around campus. As AUS grows, future development will include additional charging infrastructure as part of the AUS green building program to support tenants, staff, and passengers. Additionally, AUS recently implemented a GSE registration program to document and track the entire GSE fleet at AUS. AUS currently has 91 pieces of electric GSE at the airport and continues to work with stakeholders to expand charging infrastructure and support conversion from fueled GSE to electric. Currently, AUS is coordinating with onsite stakeholders to track future grant opportunities for charging infrastructure and GSE conversion. Charging infrastructure was included in the 2019 nine gate expansion, is planned for the future expansion on the west end of the Barbara Jordan Terminal, and will be included in a cargo facility currently under construction.

AUS is voluntarily participating in an international airport carbon management protocol administered by [Airports Council International](#). The airport is now certified at Level 3+ "Neutrality" and is the first medium hub airport in North America to achieve this. The stakeholder engagement plan promotes cooperation to reduce emissions from stakeholder operations. It defines strategies specific to each stakeholder, documents the progress of those strategies, and considers new strategies as progress is made. The current plan focuses on electrification of GSE for the airlines and ground handlers and expanding the use of renewable natural gas by onsite parking companies.

Mid-Year Budget Request Update

Mid-year budget requests are being finalized and will be ready for Council review in March.

If you have any questions regarding the information included in this report, please contact Zach Baumer, Climate Program Manager, at Zach.Baumer@austintexas.gov.

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