Joint Sustainability Committee

RECOMMENDATION 20230726-XXX

Date: August 23, 2023

Subject: Priorities for implementation of the Austin Climate Equity Plan

Motioned By: **Seconded By:**

Recommendation

Description of Recommendation to Council

Transportation Electrification Recommendations:

1. *Allocate funding for staff/consultant to define and conduct an EV Community Needs Assessment .*
2. *Provide city-wide incentives for buying and leasing EVs targeted only to low-income communities.*
3. *Create a coalition (including organizations that already have trust in the community) to provide education on clarifying the EV charging process, raise awareness about available incentives and increase community involvement by providing systematically excluded groups career/education opportunities focusing on EVs and EV charging infrastructure.*

Transportation and Land Use Recommendations:

1. *The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends allocating [**$500,000**] to pilot a Universal Basic Mobility Program (UBMP) that would advance strategy #2 above all and would forward these other strategies toward Goal 3 as well. These funds would go toward 1. Allocating or hiring **[.5 FTE]** in **[OOS? Transpo? Capmetro?]** to manage the one-year pilot, to educate UBMP participants on how to use public transit and shared mobility safely, and to assess UBMP pilot's efficacy; and 2. Providing [**300**] low-income residents of Austin with [**$100**] debit cards per month for one year to pay for public transit, shared bikes and e-bikes, and shared e-scooters.*
2. *The Joint Sustainability Committee recommends the City of Austin take a comprehensive approach to extreme heat mitigation, response, and resiliency, with a focus on the following priority actions*
    a. ***Cool Corridor Program.** Identify key mobility corridors that could serve as "cool corridors" with natural and engineered shade/cooling solutions to provide safe, climate-resilient connectivity on key pedestrian and transit routes. These corridors should (1) prioritize benefits in low-income neighborhoods facing high heat vulnerability, (2) address gaps based on the City's existing heat vulnerability analyses, and (3) be developed in consultation with community-based organizations. Initial locations to prioritize for cool corridors should include the Rundberg community and the St. Johns, Montopolis, Franklin Park, and Dove Springs neighborhoods, due to high heat vulnerability as measured by various socioeconomic and heat exposure indicators. Key investments in cool corridors should include the following:*
        i. *Drought-tolerant tree plantings;*
        ii. *In partnership with CapMetro, Art in Public Places, and other key institutions and stakeholders, joint funding for research, design, and installation of resilient transit stops (including upgrades to existing transit stops) at sites facing high heat vulnerability (see existing example). These sites should provide adequate shade, especially during extreme heat advisories;*
        iii. *Installation of shade structures (with solar panels, where feasible), with a focus on providing rest areas and shaded connectivity to parks, recreation centers, trails, schools and other community spaces/facilities;*
        iv. *Installation of fan misters at high-traffic locations;*

v. *Installation of shaded drinking fountains in parks, recreation centers, trails, and other community spaces/facilities adjacent to cool corridors;*

vi. *Bioswales, vegetated bump-outs, rain gardens, planter boxes, native/drought-tolerant vegetation, and other green infrastructure;*

vii. *Other shade/cooling amenities and features as described in the City of Austin's Green Streets Introduction and C40's Urban Cooling Toolbox*

b. ***Dedicated Shade Fund.*** *Create a dedicated shade/cooling fund [minimum $500,000 annual fund in City budget] to aggressively expand shade/cooling investments in the identified cool corridors, as well as address urgent shade needs at other key neighborhood sites based on community input.*

c. ***Comprehensive Heat Mitigation and Response Strategy.*** *Develop a comprehensive strategy to coordinate heat mitigation and response activities in Austin in light of the increasing impacts of extreme heat due to climate change. The strategy should be developed in consultation with City departments, local and regional government stakeholders, CapMetro, the private sector, and non-profit and community partners (e.g., health and social service organizations; disability and homelessness advocacy groups, etc.). The strategy should identify key actions addressing heat mitigation, emergency preparedness, and heat response that will increase the city's resilience to extreme heat. The strategy should also include a clear definition of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of identified heat mitigation and response activities for each of the key stakeholder groups described above.*

Rationale:

Transportation Electrification Recommendations Rationale

1. *Austin Energy identified this as a high equity impact strategy. The Austin Climate Equity Plan notes that conducting a community EV Community Needs Assessment will assist in identifying the intersections of mobility challenges, transportation electrification, and racial and economic justice. The assessment will inform an EV adoption growth plan that will be supported by enhanced communications efforts and incentives. [Transportation Electrification Goal 1, Strategy 1]*
2. *Even though there are federal and state-wide incentives that have made EVs more affordable and comparable to internal combustion engine vehicles, current incentives are not targeted to low-income communities. Also, EV adopters tend to belong to higher income population groups. Therefore, a city-wide incentive*

toward low-income communities can level the playing field, promote a just and equitable transition to EVs and accelerate EV adoption city-wide. This would be considered a high equity and high emission reduction impact recommendation. [Transportation Electrification Goal 1, Strategy 2]

3. *A lack of education around available tax incentives, environmental impact and how an EV works is a significant factor in EV adoption. Also, in addition to educating systematically excluded groups on EVs to increase EV adoption, providing them with education and career opportunities is essential so that they can become part of the EV workforce. [Transportation Electrification Goal 2, Strategy 4]*

Transportation and Land Use Recommendations Rationale

1. *Austin Climate Equity Plan (ACEP) Transportation & Land Use Goal 3 states, "By 2030, 50% of trips in Austin are made using public transit, biking, walking, carpooling, or avoided altogether by working from home." This goal is especially vital to equitable climate action because transportation is becoming the largest source of Austin's carbon emissions as renewables take over the energy sector, and local air pollution from combustion engine vehicles disproportionately impacts low-income groups and communities of color in Austin. Additionally, lower-income residents spend a greater proportion of their income on transportation than wealthier residents. [Transportation & Land Use Goal 3, Strategy 2] [Transportation & Land Use Goal 3, Strategy 4] [Transportation & Land Use Goal 3, Strategy 5]*
2. *Summer 2023 is on track to be Austin's hottest summer on record, surpassing prior records set in 2022 and 2011, and future summers are expected to bring more extreme heat. Mitigating heat through increased shade provision and urban cooling strategies is vital given that it is the deadliest weather hazard in the US and negatively impacts health, especially for children, the elderly, low-income populations, communities of color, and outdoor workers. A recent assessment conducted by Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin (GAVA), the City of Austin, and UT Health of the University of Texas at Austin [attached] found that extreme heat is already causing a slew of negative physical and mental health impacts in low-income Austin neighborhoods, and residents of these areas would like to see more trees, parks, water features, and water fountains to mitigate climate-related heat impacts. Providing shade and cooling in public spaces serves the Austin Climate Equity Plan's overall goal of implementing equitable strategies in response to climate change, prioritizing Austin's Eastern Crescent. [Transportation and Land Use Goal 3,*

Strategy 3] [Transportation and Land Use Goal 3, Strategy 6] [Natural Systems Goal 2, Strategy 3]

Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*