



PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20231024-31

Date: October 24, 2023

Subject: Request Council initiate amendments to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and elements or portion thereof including the Climate Equity Plan and Austin Strategic Mobility Plan in reference to Telework policies.

Motioned By: Commissioner Connolly

Seconded By: Commissioner Woods

Recommendation:

Request Council initiate amendments to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and elements or portion thereof including the Climate Equity Plan and Austin Strategic Mobility Plan in reference to Telework policies.

Please see attached memorandum and proposed amendments.

Vote: 12-0

For: Vice-Chair Hempel, Commissioners Anderson, Azhar, Barrera-Ramirez, Connolly, Cox, Haynes, Howard, Maxwell, Mushtaler, Phillips and Woods

Absent: Chair Shaw

Attest:

Andrew D. Rivera
Land Use Commission Liaison

PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

Request Council Initiate Amendments to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and elements or portion thereof including the Climate Equity Plan and Austin Strategic Mobility Plan in regards to Telework Policies

The Planning Commission recommends that the Austin City Council initiate the suggested changes to the comprehensive plan to ensure that the City of Austin is a leader for workplace, mobility, and environmental policies that implement the vision of Imagine Austin and advance the priorities it espouses. As the Planning Commission, we are tasked with the stewardship and oversight of the City's comprehensive plan. The development of Imagine Austin engaged thousands of Austin's residents, a wide array of stakeholders, consultants, and City employees through a robust process that included public meetings, online surveys, traveling teams, and more.

As elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the Austin Strategic Mobility and the Climate Equity Plans represent vital aspects of this larger vision, bringing us closer to complete, sustainable, and resilient communities. These plans outline clear modeshift goals for the City, along with goals for traffic demand management, reduction and elimination of free parking in city facilities, and compact and sustainable development.

We have identified a few key areas where goals in these plans require clarifying language to make clear the role of the City of Austin in the implementation and modeling of these policies. Furthermore, we have identified gaps where it would strengthen the plan to add clarifying language around the specific strategies required to implement these plans.

We therefore recommend the initiation of amendments to the comprehensive plan that will bolster and clarify the intent of the stated goals within these plans and advance our shared community priorities. Nothing less than the successful implementation of Imagine Austin is at stake. As one of the largest employers in Central Texas, the City of Austin will not successfully achieve the goals in its comprehensive plan, nor prompt the private sector and other public entities to meet these goals, if the City itself fails to model these policies.

Furthermore, the Planning Commission requests that while these changes to the comprehensive plan are being considered by the Austin City Council, changes in policy that might impact achieving these goals are paused or reconsidered to ensure that Austin is committed to providing leadership on the implementation of community mobility and climate equity goals.

| Am. | Plan | Section & Goal | Pg # | Proposed Amendment | Recommended Change to Proposed Amendment |
|-----|----------------|--|-------|--|---|
| 1 | Climate Equity | Transportation and Land Use, Goal #1: "By 2030, 80% of new non-residential development is located within the city's Imagine Austin activity centers and corridors." | 56-59 | <p>For "Strategy 4: Phase out free parking," under "How we'll get there" add the following bullets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all city policies for reduced parking, remote-work, and telecommuting align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and establishes the City of Austin as a leader for workplace and environmental policies to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. • City of Austin should develop remote work policies through a collaborative, all-employee process to develop clear goals and measured outcomes as a means of reducing parking demand at city facilities. In developing the city policies, Austin should build on the successful Travis County telework policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure all city policies for reduced parking, remote-work, and telecommuting align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and establishes Austin as a leader for workplace and environmental policies to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. - City of Austin should develop remote work policies through a collaborative, all-employee process to develop clear goals and measured outcomes as a means of reducing parking demand at city facilities. In developing the city policies, Austin should build on the successful Travis County telework policy. |
| 2 | Climate Equity | Transportation and Land Use, Goal #3: "By 2030, 50% of trips in Austin are made using public transit, biking, walking, carpooling, or avoided altogether by working from home" | 61-63 | <p>Add:</p> <p>Strategy 7: Promote remote and flexible work policies Actively promote remote work, telework, and flexible commute policies so as to maintain and encourage further reductions in single occupancy vehicle trips.</p> <p>How we'll get there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all policies for telework, remote work, or mandatory commuting that impact City of Austin employees are in full alignment with the goal of reducing single occupancy vehicle trips in the region, and that any future changes to city policies contribute towards reaching the 50% mode-shift goal by 2030 • Whenever appropriate encourage City partners, consultants, contractors, and stakeholders who engage with the City to adopt remote work policies or flexible commute policies that support the 50% mode-shift goal • Whenever possible, encourage private employers and local businesses to consider adopting remote work and telework policies | |
| 3 | ASMP | Transportation Demand Management Programming "Indicators and Targets" | 56-57 | <p>Beneath the Target/Indicator: "Increase the share of Austin residents who work at home instead of commuting to work. Achieve 15% of Austin residents who work at home by 2039 (7.9% of residents worked at home between 2013 and 2017)"</p> <p>Add Indicator: • Increase the share of City of Austin employees who work at home instead of commuting to work. Ensure that, whenever appropriate, all new City telework and remote work policies contribute towards the goal of achieving 15% Austin residents working from home by 2039</p> | |
| 4 | ASMP | Action Table, Transportation Demand Ma | 284 | <p>Action Item #53 "Government employer TDM strategies"</p> <p>Text change: "Seek partnerships with various federal, state, and local government agencies and universities that are major employers within Austin to encourage employees to telework or to take public transportation and other modes to work and disincentivize employees to drive alone to work. Prioritize the alignment of City of Austin workplace policies, including telework policies, to achieve these goals."</p> | |
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