





MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Genesis D. Gavino, Chief of Staff 

FROM: Zach Baumer, Chief Sustainability Officer 

DATE: January 16, 2025

SUBJECT: **Staff Update to Resolution No. 20240718-093 – Comprehensive Climate Implementation Program**

Background

The Austin City Council adopted the [Austin Climate Equity Plan](#) in September 2021 to equitably achieve net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. With five key sections — Sustainable Buildings, Transportation Electrification, Transportation and Land Use, Food and Product Consumption, and Natural Systems — the plan outlines 17 goals and 75 strategies to be completed by 2030. Considerable progress has been made since the plan’s adoption, but work remains, requiring collective action and continued investment. According to a [recent analysis conducted by the Office of Sustainability](#), 11 of the 17 goals in the plan are considered either “in need of support” or “off track.”

Since 2023, the City of Austin has secured \$242 Million in federal grants to support key climate initiatives. Highlights include \$105M for the Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant, \$48M from the EPA greenhouse gas reduction fund for transportation demand management, \$30M for the Solar for All program, and \$15M for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Additionally, decisions on funding applications worth over \$200M are pending.

In July 2024, the Austin City Council passed [Resolution 20240718-093](#), directing the City Manager to create a comprehensive climate implementation program that refocuses City resources toward achieving our community-wide net-zero goal. In the Fall of 2024, staff began researching global best practices for improving our climate plan implementation, including interviews with peer cities and their networks. Through this research, staff identified two key components necessary for the successful implementation of a climate plan:

1. Creating a public-facing document that defines prioritized actions to be implemented.
2. Allocating appropriate City resources and capacity for implementing the plan.

Comprehensive Climate Implementation Program

By more effectively organizing City departments towards prioritized implementation, we can create the conditions to scale up actions needed to meet the goals in the Climate Equity Plan. The structure of this internal Comprehensive Climate Implementation Program will include four main objectives:

1. Create “Sustainability Liaisons” in relevant departments to serve as points of contact for the Office of Sustainability to increase communication, implement projects, and report on results.
2. Produce annual departmental work plans on all climate mitigation-related actions for review and approval by the City Manager’s Office.
3. Create a new cross-departmental Climate Action Team structure with quarterly roundtables for liaisons and departmental staff to discuss progress or barriers to implementation.
4. Develop a Climate Implementation Plan on a biannual schedule outlining specific projects that achieve greenhouse gas reductions within a two-year timeframe.

Climate Implementation Plan

The two-year Climate Implementation Plan will provide clear direction for advancing the goals and strategies of the Climate Equity Plan. The development of this plan is a collaborative effort involving City staff and the Joint Sustainability Committee. A comprehensive list of actions has been collected and prioritized using the Action Selection and Prioritisation tool developed by C40, a global network of cities focused on addressing climate change. Cross-departmental workshops are currently being held to assess each action’s feasibility, potential for greenhouse gas reduction, cost, and priority level.

The final product will contain a prioritized list of projects, programs, and policies, their potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, financial analysis regarding their cost and savings, and other key details for decision-making. The document will exist as a roadmap for City leadership on clear and practical actions we can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2027. Over the next two years, our quarterly updates to the Council will focus on the status of this implementation plan.

Next Steps

Progress on all aspects of the comprehensive Climate Implementation Program is underway and includes the following next steps.

- **Implementation Program Launch (Q1 2025):** Sustainability Liaisons will be identified in each relevant department, departmental work plans will be developed and approved, and the first liaison roundtable will be held. This will be accompanied by a Q1 Council update, providing progress updates and detailing the next phase of work.
- **Climate Implementation Plan Released (March 2025):** The Office of Sustainability will publish the first biannual Climate Implementation Plan, a roadmap for addressing climate change through City capacity and investment for the next two years.
- **Bond Development Process (Ongoing):** The Office of Sustainability is working closely with Capital Delivery Services to develop a comprehensive bond package with a climate component.
- **Regional Collaboration:** The regional climate planning effort through the [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant](#) process is continuing, which will strengthen relationships with neighboring municipalities.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this memorandum, please contact Zach Baumer, Chief Sustainability Officer, at Zach.Baumer@austintexas.gov.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
CMO Executive Team