

Pedestrian Advisory Council Recommendation: Draft Austin Climate Equity Plan

WHEREAS, the Pedestrian Advisory Council's (PAC) purpose is to advise the City of Austin and other entities on planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement regarding creating, maintaining, and operating pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, climate change presents an existential and quality-of-life threat to humanity and many other species and swift action must be taken to mitigate climate change's already-occurring impacts;

WHEREAS, the impacts of climate change, such as recent large fires in the western US, longer and more intense droughts in Austin, higher risk of wildfire in the entire state of Texas, and larger, more destructive storms in Austin as well as the Gulf Coast, are being felt sooner than anticipated and that previous environmental goals may now be insufficient given these expedited impacts;

WHEREAS, our transportation choices, induced by auto-centric land use patterns, produce 35% of Austinites' carbon emissions;

WHEREAS, personal electric automobiles will not address, and in some cases may worsen, many environmental issues, such as the majority of pollution from oceanic microplastics coming from wearing down automobile tires and production and disposal of batteries and the high amount of impervious surface required for our high amount of driving;

WHEREAS, the perpetuation of personal electric automobiles may further exacerbate current inequalities due to lack of access;

WHEREAS, the existence of auto-centric infrastructure, such as wide roads and abundant parking, encourages driving;

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) calls for a doubling of walk commuting and for 50% of all trips to be taken via non-Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV) by 2039;

WHEREAS, the recent conversion of vehicle lanes on Congress Avenue to protected bicycle lanes demonstrates the feasibility of quick, inexpensive, and impactful changes to our streets;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the PAC recommends the following be integrated into the Draft Austin Climate Equity Plan (ACEP):

- A goal be set to reduce regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by meaningful and ambitious levels
- All roads wider than two vehicle lanes have all such additional lanes reallocated to non-automobile transportation modes by 2030
- No rights of way within Austin city limits be expanded to create more space for automobiles, although the street network should be enhanced to create better connectivity and eliminate dead end streets
- Minimum parking requirements, except for ensuring sufficient ADA parking, be eliminated citywide
- A plan be developed for converting an ambitious percentage of surface level parking and parking structures to other uses
- Align this plan to greatly increase compact and connected density within the City, as called for in Imagine Austin, with the goal of maximizing accessible walkability in all neighborhoods as soon as possible, and to reduce car dependency while also increasing green spaces within the city
- More assertively stress the scale of the climate emergency and how it will require a radical transformation to our way of life

Date: September 14, 2020

Vote: 5-0 with Armstrong, Bauereis, Henderson, and Mulcahy absent

Attest:



Emily Smith, staff liaison