



TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Transportation will soon become the largest contributor to our community's greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore the most critical factor to reaching our climate plan goals. Where our residents live, work and play and how they move around our city greatly impacts our community-wide emissions. Coordinated transportation and land use strategies can improve access to different types of transportation, create more affordable housing, support diverse communities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The vision of this section is to cultivate a person-centered network of complete communities that meets the needs of low-income communities and communities of color of all ages and abilities.

Transportation and land use are broad topics that significantly impact our community's quality of life and greenhouse gas emissions. The [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#), neighborhood and corridor plans, and the land development code shape the look of our city and how residents and visitors navigate it as we grow. Transportation plans like the [Austin Strategic Mobility Plan](#) and Capital Metro's [Project Connect](#) transit plan further influence how we get around and reduce our dependence on cars. The [Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint](#) and related affordable housing initiatives aim to increase affordable housing units.

In November of 2020, Austin voters approved \$7.1 billion for Proposition A, also known as Project Connect. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Project Connect has broad goals to address traffic congestion, expand service for essential workers, decrease traffic fatalities, create jobs, and provide access to schools, health care, jobs, and the airport. To achieve these goals, Capital Metro plans to add two light rail lines, one bus rapid transit line, and one commuter rail line to the already existing Red Line, which will also undergo major improvements. The proposal also calls for investments for all routes, a transit tunnel through the downtown area, a fully electric bus and train fleet, and new park and ride areas throughout the service area. Project Connect forecasts daily ridership of 61,600 to 73,600. These estimates translate into thousands of daily commuters out of cars, reducing transportation emissions by thousands of tons per year.

While these plans provide direction on how the Central Texas region might grow, the equity and climate discussion is somewhat new to this topic. Low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities have felt the brunt of publicly supported racist and ableist policies and dwindling resources. As a result, they are often forced to make difficult decisions under the weight of this oppression.

In addition, the influx of people moving to Austin over the last 30 years — many with high-paying jobs — has dramatically increased property values and the price of goods and services in Central Texas, which has displaced low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities. This displacement forces low-income residents to the outskirts of Austin and surrounding jurisdictions and further away from jobs centers and amenities. This, in turn, increases the dependency on carbon-intensive automobiles to fulfill daily needs.

If all the Transportation and Land Use goals and strategies were put in place, including Capital Metro's Project Connect, we could reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions 3% or 400,000 metric tons by 2030.

This pattern highlights the need to preserve and expand the amount of affordable housing in Austin and work regionally to address the interwoven nature of transportation and land use.

Updating the land use code can foster complete communities that meet the basic needs of all residents through integrated land use planning, transportation planning, and community design. While creating complete communities through the code and related tools is vital to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the Transportation & Land Use Advisory Group chose not to tackle specific code questions due to ongoing City Council discussions. Instead, the group focused on strategies aligned with Imagine Austin and the City Council's direction on more sustainable development and travel patterns.

Community Feedback

Transportation and land use were recurring themes in the Community Climate Ambassadors' feedback. For some, public transit is a lifeline to jobs, healthy food, health care centers, daycare, and other essential services. Population growth has made housing and services more expensive, displacing communities of color and rapidly changing the local culture. The Ambassadors stressed the need to enact policies that make transportation and housing safe and affordable.

GOAL 1:



By 2030, 80% of new non-residential development is located within the city's Imagine Austin activity centers and corridors.

Strategy 1: Plan for complete communities

Adopt Complete Communities plans that reverse historical and racist impacts on areas experiencing displacement and preserve neighborhoods in communities of color. Some examples include neighborhood, village, corridor, and station area plans. Complete Communities is a planning concept that aims to meet the basic needs of all residents in a community through integrated land use planning, transportation planning, and community design.

How we'll get there:

- Align future development with regional planning efforts like the Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map, CAMPO 2045 Plan, and other regional planning efforts in surrounding cities like Bastrop and Manor.

Strategy 2: Work with employers on location and amenities

Work with medium and large employers to locate their places of business in growth centers and along corridors.



"Tenderly" by Connie Arismendi was created in honor of big band orchestra leader Nash Hernandez Sr. The piece was commissioned by City of Austin Art in Public Places.

How we'll get there:

- Work with local corporations to fund anti-displacement measures, including supporting systematically excluded businesses and advancing workforce development programs.
- Work with local corporations to include community amenities, such as parks, transit stops, healthy food locations, childcare options, health centers, community centers, and facilities for seniors in future development projects.

Strategy 3: Create mobility hubs

Create community mobility hubs, including park-and-rides, that offer various first- and last-mile mobility options adjacent to transit stops to offer a complete trip experience.

How we'll get there:

- Improve the physical access to and through the transit stop/station area to be accessible to all.
- Identify necessary resources to carry out and maintain placemaking and beautification opportunities. Hire low-income individuals, people of color, people with disabilities, artists, creators, and makers to design and create beautification projects.
- Provide diverse amenities and family-friendly spaces adjacent to mobility hubs.

Strategy 4: Phase out free parking

Phase out the practice of providing free parking spaces to employees at City of Austin facilities and other large employers located within 1/2 mile of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan's transit priority network. Instead, offer a parking cash-out, carpool and vanpool options, flex schedules, transit passes, support for teleworking, or other commuter benefits program.

How we'll get there:

- Focus parking reduction strategies on large employers to lessen the potential negative impacts on communities of color, particularly those displaced to parts of the city where transit service is less frequent or unavailable. Providing free or subsidized parking for higher-income, predominantly white employees who have other options incentivizes them to drive. This reduces funding and support for other modes like public transit that are disproportionately used by low-income communities and communities of color.
- Conduct an inclusive engagement process to provide affordable parking and other multimodal access options for essential services. These could include transit stops, healthy food locations, health centers, community centers, multi-family residences, facilities for seniors, and construction sites.

GOAL 2:



By 2027, preserve and produce 135,000 housing units, including 60,000 affordable housing units*, with 75% of new housing located within ½ mile of Imagine Austin activity centers and corridors.

**This goal is based on the Council-adopted Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint.*

Strategy 1: Offer immediate affordable housing assistance

Engage directly with communities that are vulnerable to displacement and connect them with services. Proactively monitor affordable housing properties at risk of losing their affordability status to extend the period of affordability.

How we'll get there:

- Increase fair housing enforcement and education.
- Incorporate robust tenant protections for all rental properties receiving City support, including streamlining the application process for affordable units.
- Support tenant organizing and engagement and provide legal and other assistance to tenants facing eviction or displacement.
- Provide tenant relocation assistance and emergency rental assistance.

"I'm concerned that the low-income and marginalized communities in Austin are being pushed out and reducing the vibrancy and diversity of our city."

– Austin community member

Strategy 2: Fund affordable housing

Increase funding for the City's current Housing Trust Fund and support capacity building for community development corporations.

How we'll get there:

- The City may purchase properties in gentrifying areas to preserve or develop new affordable housing units with a range of housing types, such as single-family, duplex, townhomes, etc.
- Recalibrate, streamline and expand density bonus programs to serve renters at or below 60% Median Family Income (MFI). Support the creation of deeply affordable units within the growth centers, corridors, and transit-rich areas at 20% and 30% MFI and below.
- Implement a preference policy to prioritize new City-subsidized affordable units for income-qualified households.
- Make the application process for deeply affordable housing easier, more transparent, and more efficient.

Strategy 3: Enhance community engagement for affordable housing and anti-displacement programs

Include low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities directly affected by systemic inequalities in the City's Housing Investment Review Committee activities and when creating anti-displacement programs. Enhance direct outreach of Housing and Planning Department-subsidized affordable units in gentrifying areas with culturally relevant communication strategies.

GOAL 3:



By 2030, 50% of trips in Austin are made using public transit, biking, walking, carpooling, or avoided altogether by working from home*.

**Based on City of Austin and Capital Metro data, includes all trips, and was approximately 20% in 2019.*

Strategy 1: Expand and improve public transportation

Work with the Austin Transit Partnership to implement Project Connect and expand and improve public transportation services.

How we'll get there:

- Hire residents from communities negatively impacted by racist transportation-related municipal policies to review past decisions and make recommendations to improve the lives of low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities.
- Conduct a community needs assessment to identify gaps in services based on greatest mobility needs and ensure projects are integrated and coordinated across City departments and other institutions.
- Expand paratransit, defined as flexibly scheduled and routed services available to any community member in the coverage area regardless of distance from bus routes, including those with professional medical and psychiatric diagnoses, guidance, and documentation.
- Ensure that transit improvement projects do not accelerate displacement and gentrification.

Strategy 2: Promote free transportation options

Create comprehensive, user-friendly resources connecting community members with free transportation options.

How we'll get there:

- Expand free transit options, including through Capital Metro, to provide increased transportation access for low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities.

- In partnership with community-based organizations, promote awareness of existing free transportation resources in a culturally competent way.

Strategy 3: Enhance transit stations and stops

Partner with Capital Metro, developers, and community organizers to engage low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities to improve transit stops, stations, and access to these facilities.

How we'll get there:

- Enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines regulations to ensure that transit and public spaces in and around transit stops are accessible to all and connect to critical services like healthy food locations, health centers, community centers, multi-family residences and facilities for seniors.

Strategy 4: Prioritize bicycle networks

Implement the 2020 Proposition B voter-approved general obligation bonds for transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks, transportation-related bikeways, urban trails, transportation safety projects, safe routes to school, and substandard streets in low-income communities and communities of color through a meaningful community engagement process.

How we'll get there:

- Utilize historic investment pattern analysis to ensure systematically excluded areas are prioritized when receiving new bicycle infrastructure.
- Properly maintain roads and sidewalks by keeping pavement, physical barriers, markings, signage, and signal detection in good condition and free of debris and other impediments.
- Make intersections safer for bicycles, pedestrians, and communities with impaired mobility.
- Support locally initiated community events that are car-free and expand "Slow Streets" programs through enhanced community engagement.

Strategy 5: Enhance bicycle education and training

Provide access to free or reduced-priced bicycles and basic bicycle training for communities of color and train police officers on bicycle laws and racial profiling to improve the comfort and safety of people of color riding bicycles.

How we'll get there:

- Invest in community-based alternatives to police while providing more legal protections for bicycle riders.
- Hire low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities to manage and provide bicycle training.

Strategy 6: Improve sidewalks, urban trails, and crossings

Update the City's Sidewalk Plan and Urban Trails Plan, emphasizing equity and meaningful community engagement.

How we'll get there:

- Build all high and very-high priority sidewalk and trail segments and address ADA barriers and gaps in the sidewalk and trail systems according to the Sidewalk Plan/ADA Transition Plan and Public Rights-Of-Way Accessibility Guidelines regulations. These guidelines ensure that sidewalks, pedestrian street crossings, pedestrian signals, and other facilities for pedestrians are readily accessible to and usable by pedestrians with disabilities.
- For new sidewalk and trail construction, improve access to transit stops, healthy food locations, health centers, community centers, multi-family residences, and facilities for seniors. Prioritize areas that have been systematically excluded and zip codes with higher rates of chronic illness or disability status using lived experience and ground-truthed City data. Include provisions for shade and ambient lighting in the design and construction of new sidewalks and trails.
- Prioritize low-cost pedestrian crossing improvements for communities of color in areas with poor quality or a lack of pedestrian infrastructure.

