

# City of Austin Utilities

## COVID-19 Relief Funding Update

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# Agenda

- Highlights
- Utility Bill Relief Funding (Council approved April 9<sup>th</sup>)\*
- Customer Communication
- Current Trends
  - Payment Arrangements
  - Customer Response
  - Aging Trends
- Next Steps



**\*Utility bill assistance is still available at [www.austinbillhelp.com](http://www.austinbillhelp.com)**



# Austin Energy 2020 Pandemic Response

## April 2020

Council Approved  
Utility Bill Relief  
Funding

Disconnections and  
Late Fees Suspended

## May – Dec 2020

AustinBillHelp.com launched  
Multi-channel communication and  
outreach

Engaged with community partners and  
expanded Plus 1

## Current State

AustinBillHelp.com  
still available

Late fees resumed to  
encourage customer  
contact

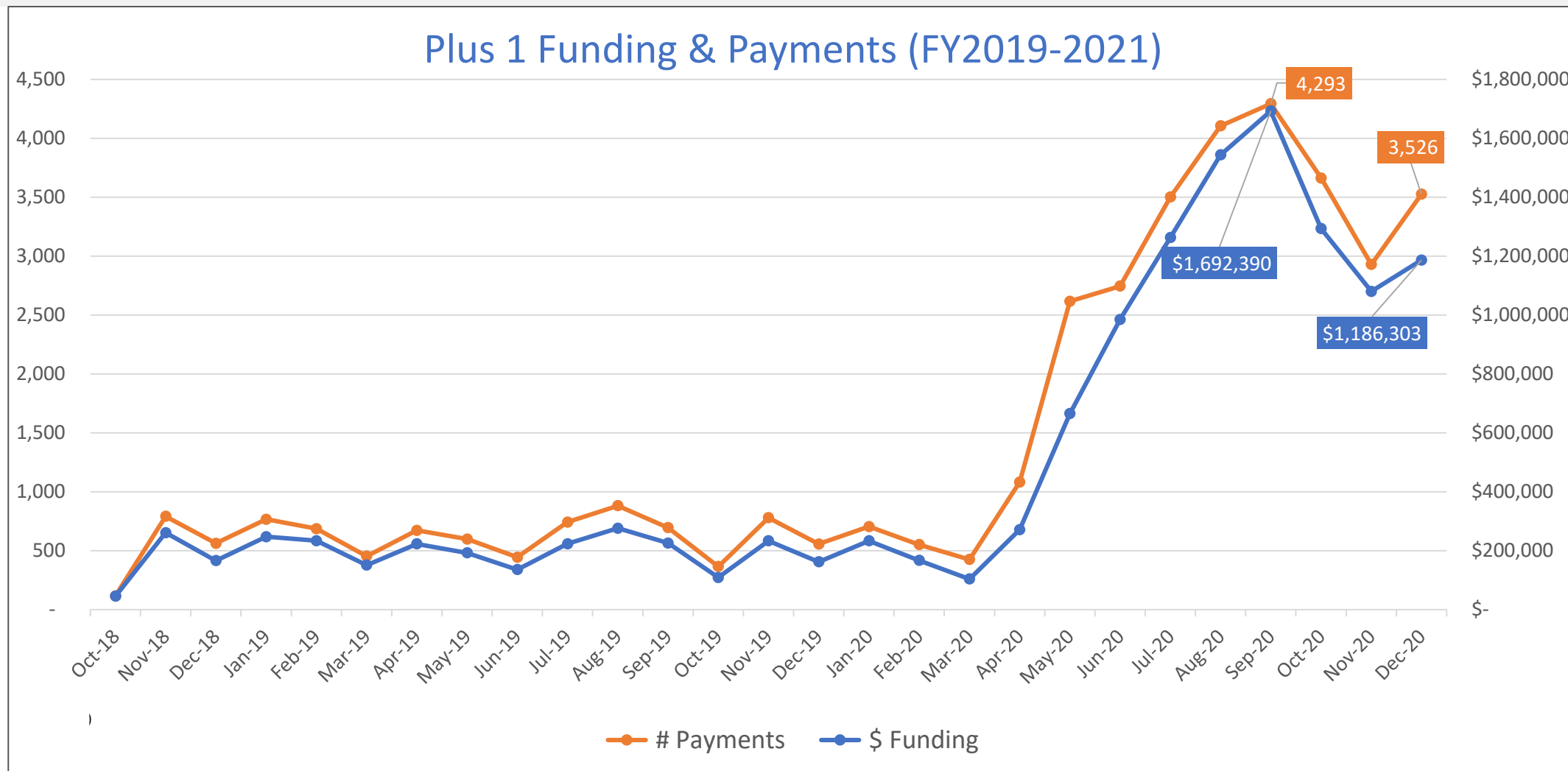


**Austin Energy goals to date have focused on offering utility bill assistance through relief programs and expanded payment options.**



# Utility Bill Relief Funding: COVID-19

*As part of COA Utilities' COVID-19 response, an initial \$10M was added in April 2020 to the Plus 1 fund and an additional \$10M will be made available in 2021.*







# Communication Efforts

Since April 2020 Austin Energy has encouraged customer contact by:

- Emphasizing assistance options for residential
- Highlighting debt management tools for all
- Targeting campaigns for unpaid and accruing large balances

## In Focus: Marketing communications

**Your Safety. Your Utilities. Our Priority.**

We want to keep your lights on and your water running.

The City of Austin cares about your health and safety. Smart actions can keep your utilities on and help you stay safe. Remember these tips during this time of caution:

- Get help with utilities:** Facing financial hardship? From utility bill discounts to budget billing, the City of Austin offers support for qualifying customers. See if you qualify: [austinenergy.com/billhelp](http://austinenergy.com/billhelp).
- Continue your service:** The City of Austin has dropped utility disconnections caused by non-payment. If your utilities were recently turned off because of unpaid bills, contact City of Austin Utilities today for a courtesy reconnection. Call 512-454-9400.
- Consider new ways to pay:** For public safety reasons, the City of Austin Walk-In Utility Service Centers are currently closed. Check out other payment options by visiting [austinenergy.com/paymentsolutions](http://austinenergy.com/paymentsolutions) or call 3-1-1 for more information.
- Stop the scams:** Watch for possible scams during this time. Contact us if you have any doubts about a suspicious billing call or email. Call 512-454-9400.

While physical distancing, stay connected to your City Utilities and City information channels. However you spend your time at home, be safe and contact us if you need utility assistance.

City of Austin Utilities | For more information, please visit: [austintexas.gov/COVID19](http://austintexas.gov/COVID19)

Late fees resume **Nov. 1**

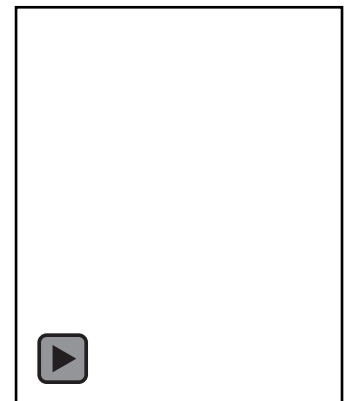
**Help is still available**

Visit [austinbillhelp.com](http://austinbillhelp.com) or call 512-765-9721

City of Austin Utilities

Apply now for emergency financial assistance with your utility bill.

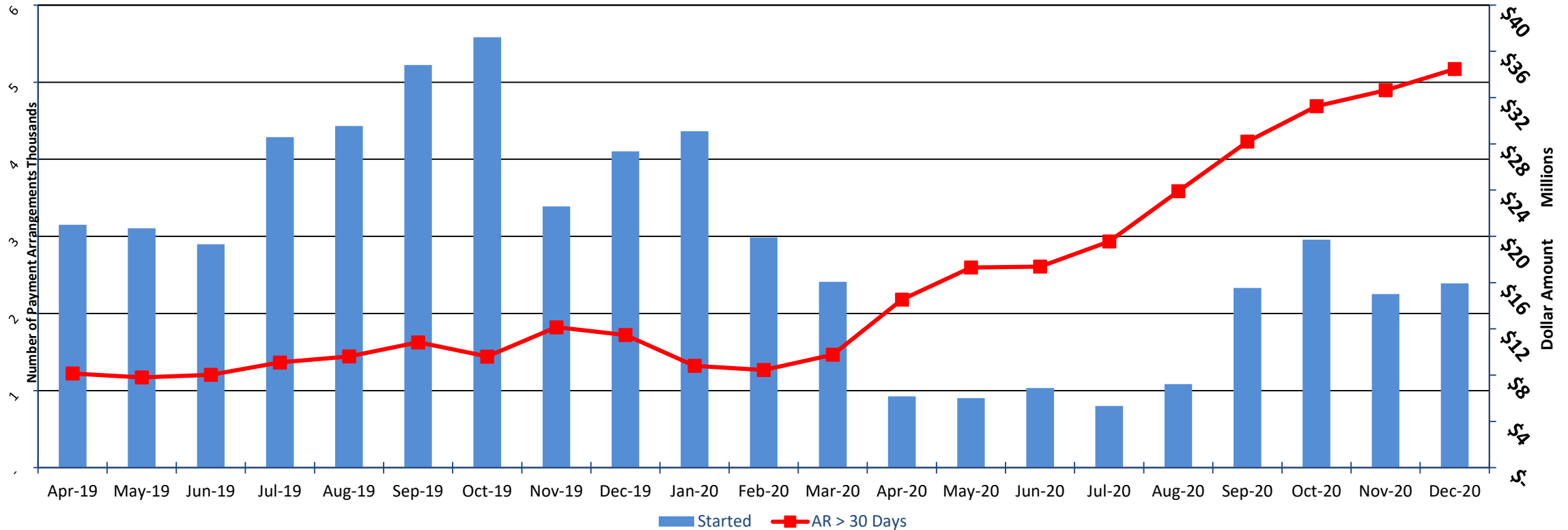
City of Austin Utilities | [austinbillhelp.com](http://austinbillhelp.com)



# Payment Arrangement Trends

*With the availability of a 'Pandemic PA' allowing up to 36 months of repayment opportunity and additional assistance funding, we are asking customers to reach us to address increasing aging balances.*

Monthly Payment Arrangement Allocation (Total # / Total \$)

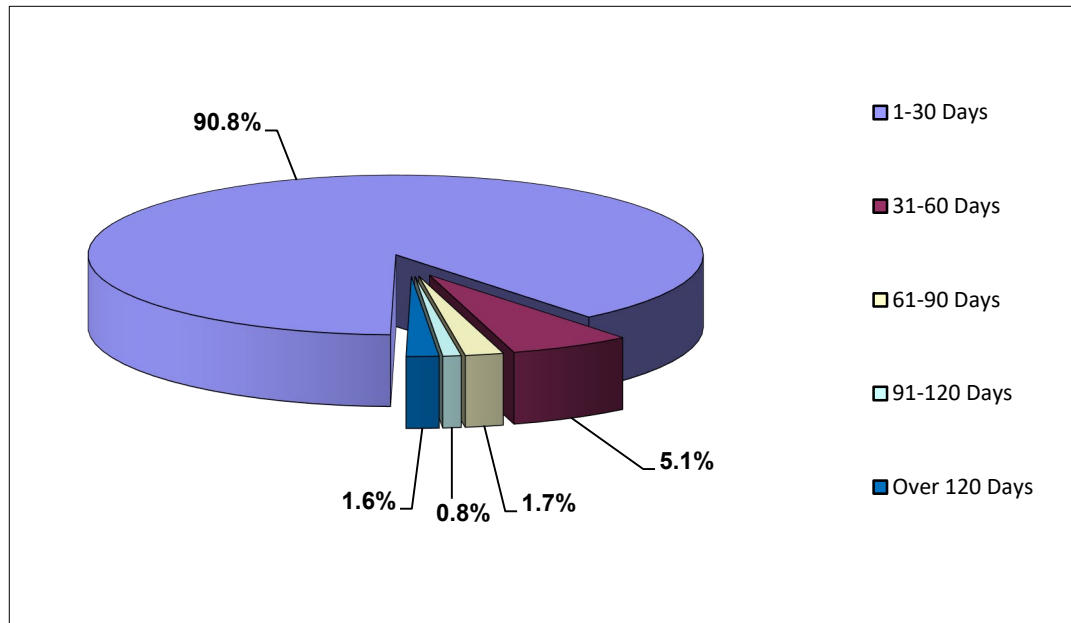


	Last Year (Dec 2019)	This Month (Dec 2020)
PA Balances	\$10,658,513.01	\$8,594,361.60
PA Count	22,858	11,823
PA Starts	4,104	2,390
Total Active A/R >30 days	\$22,135,853.03	\$43,064,616.79

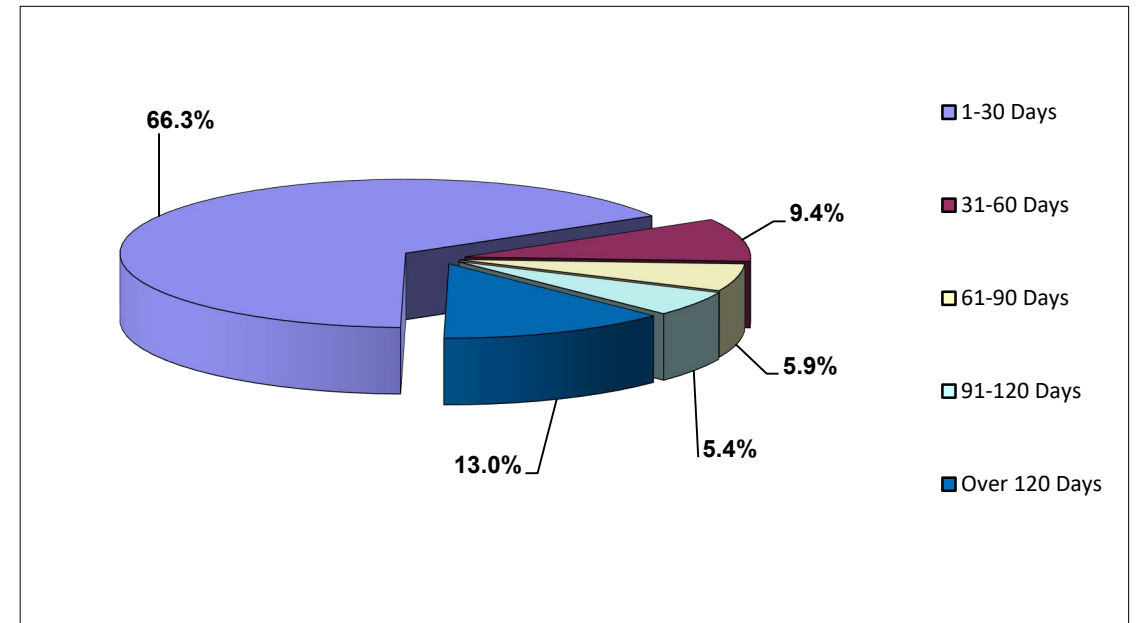


# Aged Receivables Overview

## March 2020 Outstanding Receivables



## December 2020 Outstanding Receivables

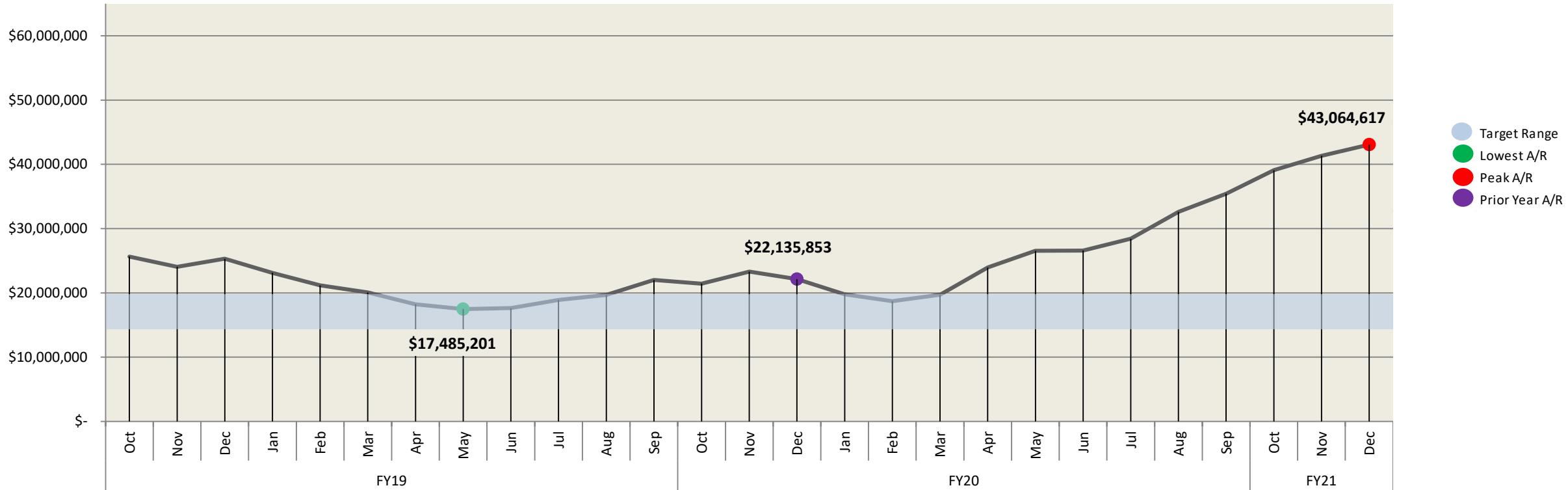


**Accounts considered current have declined from 90% in March 2020 to 66% in Dec 2020 and debt greater than 90 days old has increased 8x from \$2.3MM to \$18.8MM**



# Historical monthly active A/R dollars for all utilities

Total active A/R > 30 Days



- March 13, 2020: Moratorium on soft services began in response to COVID-19



Fiscal Years 2019 offers a view into a typical year for aged receivables management. At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, we began to experience a consistent upward trend.



# Engaging City of Austin Utility Customers

## Relief focus

### ***Our plan:***

- *Continue to encourage customer contact through outreach*
- *Continue to provide customer relief options*

***In response to continued pandemic impacts, resumption of collections activities has been adjusted to begin mid-2021. We continue to offer***

- *Late fee waivers (for those who receive relief funding or enter into a payment arrangement)*
- *Payment arrangements with up to 36 months repayment options (24 months for commercial)*
- *Expanded pay channel options (Walmart, Paypal, Venmo...)*
- *Utility bill assistance through [AustinBillHelp.com](https://austinbillhelp.com) and local partnerships*



# Resuming Receivables Management

## Jan/Feb 2021

Continue utility bill relief funding and customer outreach. Issue news release announcing gradual return to standard operations.

## March 2021

Targeted door hanger campaign to encourage customer contact from those most at risk.

## April 2021

Service disconnection notices resume and news release highlights key dates to resume all standard operations.

## May 2021

Resumption of all standard collections activity including disconnection for customers who have not made arrangements.



**Good news: 2021 funds are still available and there is still time for customers to contact us or a community partner for assistance options.**



# Questions?

