

Discovery Questions from Paul Robbins to Solar and Storage Coalition (SSC)

1.0 General Questions

Let me preface my questions by saying that I generally support the idea of giving value to solar and storage. I have held this view long before I read the position statement. However, details are lacking and the concepts are vague.

1.1 Who are the Central Texas principals in the Coalition (other than the Eric Goff)?

1.2 Does the Coalition have specific rate-related suggestions (with proposed prices and rate structures)?

1.3 Currently battery costs are quite high because of the cost of raw materials. I hope this changes, but in the interim, there probably will not be many new customers that apply for these new rates. When does the Coalition predict the rates will see robust participation?

1.4 Provide a current estimate of the number of Austin Energy customers with battery storage (if available).

1.5 According to an Austin Energy response to one of my discovery questions, the round-trip efficiency of the Austin Shines battery project in 2021 was 59%. I am not sure of the specific reasons for this, but it hints at a problem in decentralized storage.

While average losses may generally be lower, how will the proposed solar plus storage rates adapt to battery losses?

1.6 The Position Statement has faulted Austin Energy's billing system as an obstacle to its proposed rate/s. Given the history of the situation over several decades, what *specific* proposals is the Coalition offering that might create a better outcome? (Issuing an RFP for a new system, in and of itself, may not lead to a better situation.)

1.7 Does the Coalition have a position on whether electric vehicle batteries without solar and small home natural gas generators used in emergencies should also be encouraged to sell to Austin Energy if solar and storage rates are established?

2.0 Customer Assistance Program (CAP) Questions

Let me preface my questions by stating that I was concerned at the proposal to give Customer Assistance Program money to entire census tracts. The current program (begun in 2013) has been cursed with inefficiencies since it began. It has inadvertently given substantial amounts of its money to customers with high property wealth.

The proposal here has nothing to do with issues related to solar and storage. Though the intervener is free to propose anything they choose related to Austin Energy's electric rates, this issue certainly is not relevant to its core mission.

2.1 In Austin, several low-income census tracts are rife with gentrification. One can find relatively wealthy people within their boundaries, and this trend is increasing at a fast pace.

A. Does the Coalition have any way to estimate how broadly gentrification may affect targeted Census tracts?

B. Does the Coalition have a bill impact to the general ratepayers for awarding CAP to gentrified homes or neighborhoods?

2.2 In its Position Statement, the Coalition has stated one of the reasons for the Census tract approach is CAP's inaccessibility to ratepayers who are immigrants. The following is as much a statement as a question, but is the Coalition aware that about 1/6 of CAP participants are income qualified, and non-citizens who are Austin Energy ratepayers can apply for the program by this method?

2.3 Is there a bill impact to the general ratepayers for this broad proposal?

2.4 Can the Coalition cite any precedents for utility low-income bill reduction programs by census tract occurring in the U.S.?