

# Planet Texas 2050 Shares Support for Austin Climate Equity Plan

*The Planet Texas 2050 theme organizing committee shows its support for the City of Austin's Climate Equity Plan. We also request that the UT Austin President's Sustainability Steering Committee integrate climate equity-related goals and strategies into the university Sustainability Master Plan. To show your support for these initiatives, sign the form [here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdM-L-iE80SYFCTUwnpPQ_98g-Nn1IewlSKtazMb8fJHeJAQ/viewform) ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdM-L-iE80SYFCTUwnpPQ\\_98g-Nn1IewlSKtazMb8fJHeJAQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdM-L-iE80SYFCTUwnpPQ_98g-Nn1IewlSKtazMb8fJHeJAQ/viewform)).*

October 27, 2020

The undersigned UT Austin students, staff and faculty write in support of the City of Austin's Climate Equity Plan (ACEP). We are requesting that the UT Austin President's Sustainability Steering Committee integrate likeminded, complementary goals and strategies into the university Sustainability Master Plan.

In support of the ACEP, we share a commitment to the vision and goals expressed in the plan, including reaching net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Austin by 2040. We also support ideas expressed in the plan for climate action that addresses racial inequality to deliver a cleaner, healthier, more affordable and accessible region for all.

We also recognize that UT Austin is already taking steps to lower our own campus carbon footprint in alignment with the major areas of the plan, notably:

## Sustainable Buildings

UT Austin has had a commitment to LEED Silver as a goal for all new buildings and a highly efficient campus district energy system. While UT Austin still relies on natural gas for energy generation and is an island within the Austin Energy service area, UT Austin is focused on efficiency, reliability and keeping the cost of electricity as low as possible for the university.

## Transportation and Land Use

UT Austin provides no free parking, and offers transportation benefits to students, staff and faculty that encourage alternative commuting behaviors such as cycling, carpools and vanpools and free transit access on Capital Metro services.

### Transportation Electrification

The campus owned vehicle fleet includes over 200 electric carts and limited charging stations are available on-campus.

### Food and Product Consumption

UT Austin has adopted environmental and social sustainability procurement guidelines, has historically composted food waste from dining halls, and is committed to achieving zero waste.

### Natural Systems

UT Austin Landscape Services is dedicated to maintaining the eco-system functionality of the campus landscape and tree canopy (recognized by Tree Campus USA for over 10 years) and the campus recently was certified as a Bee Friendly Campus.

However, even with these highpoints, we feel UT Austin can be a more vocal and ambitious leader on acting to reduce GHG emissions in an effort to mitigate climate change. This position was also recently expressed in a Daily Texan column by Isabelle Costello (Oct. 25, 2020). In support of UT Austin further aligning our actions with the City of Austin's goals for a carbon-neutral region, the signatories of this letter encourage the UT Austin President's Sustainability Steering Committee to review the ACEP and propose specific recommendations that both align with the ACEP actions and are appropriate for a flagship public research university that counts itself a leader in sustainability in higher education.

We understand the Committee has already taken steps toward updating the UT Austin 2015 Sustainability Master Plan. While the 2015 Sustainability Plan includes a placeholder for evaluating UT's GHG emissions, we request that the Committee put before university leadership a detailed plan for addressing climate impacts when updating the Plan in the coming year. We also ask that this plan for reducing GHG emissions accords with the ACEP's focus on racial and other forms of equity.

Sincerely,

Planet Texas 2050 Theme Organizing Committee

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We're committed to harnessing the talent, passion, and expertise of researchers from all disciplines at UT to tackle some of humanity's biggest challenges.

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