

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

To: Pasadena City Council

From: Environmental Advisory Commission

Date: February 2021

Subject: Climate Action Plan 2019 Annual Update

The current health pandemic has created many challenges. Indeed, the co-occurring climate crisis has also taken greater clarity with radical weather events, wildfires continuing to impact communities across the globe. This challenge is also an opportunity to unite the City around bolder action. People are rethinking how and how often we commute to work and to stores providing hope we might embrace human powered transportation. There is a greater appreciation for what nature provides for our mental and physical health and the community is embracing greenspace. The challenge of the pandemic has brought many neighbors together giving hope that the collective action needed to ensure a more resilient Pasadena is possible.

Attached you will find summary comments approved by the Environmental Advisory Commission offering comments on the 2019 Annual Update to the Climate Action Plan. The document is somewhat light in praise. Not because there are not achievements worth of celebration but, because we felt our critical comments would both echo the urgency of the climate crisis and be most useful focusing on what we, as a City, can improve. We are challenging ourselves as a commission to be a part of these solutions and greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel Rossman, Chair
The Environmental Advisory Commission

MAIN POINTS

The Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) would like to offer praise for the city's completion of the annual Climate Action Plan (CAP) assessment for 2019 despite the unique events and constraints of 2020. The city's commitment to reviewing the implementation of the CAP will directly impact achieving CAP goals.

While we appreciate the city's efforts, we feel that they are not commensurate with the existential threat that Green House Gases (GHG's) emissions represent. As such the EAC will continue to work with CAP/city staff to identify and coordinate high impact projects to reduce GHG's. Ideally these projects would also have a high potential to raise public awareness.

It should be noted we have made significant progress on many of the strategies outlined in the plan. We are however falling short in a few critical areas and the language of the plan somewhat obfuscates these shortcomings. We would appreciate a more direct assessment that articulates if we are not on track to meet our goal. In the following sections, we respond to the report by area.

Beyond this year, we look forward to the audit of the city's GHG emissions in the coming year. This provides an opportunity to learn from these first years of CAP implementation.

COMMENTS BY AREA

1. Sustainable Mobility and Land Use

The EAC appreciates that the city is likely to achieve current public transit and carpool mode goals. Since transportation accounts for the majority of the greenhouse gas emissions in our community, we should aggressively assess how to make up for the shortfalls that are also in this annual report.

Walking and Bicycling as well as Public Transit strategies are not on target to meet goals. We recommend shifting funding away from roads to alternative transit and a robust, social science based approach to nudging human behavior and educational engagement. For example, dedicated bike lanes are a necessary ingredient in convincing people that it is safe to be cycling on the road with automobiles.

2. Energy Efficiency & Conservation

The EAC appreciates the city's emphasis on energy since it is the second highest source of emissions in the community and the strategy projected to achieve the greatest GHG reductions in the CAP. We feel an even greater emphasis is required however. For example, E-3.1 (Increase municipal energy conservation), it's unclear how the city is likely to achieve the 10% goal of reduced energy consumption when the city's audit of energy use is still a Tier 2 action. We do appreciate that it has been moved up from Tier 3. Since the city has total authority over its own buildings, this is within the city's locus of control and therefore relatively straightforward to accomplish compared to changing residential and commercial behaviors.

EAC appreciates the goal to move all city power consumption accounts to the renewable power rate, but that doesn't change how the energy is being generated or the city's intermountain power contract. We believe more education about the need for renewables and incentives to help move residential and commercial customers toward installing renewables is a better goal.

Instead of shifting the city's power rate, that money could be used for incentives which will increase the real amount of renewable generation.

3. Water Conservation

While this is a small part of overall GHG reductions EAC appreciates the emphasis on this issue within the cap for its additional benefits. The long-term sustainability of our local aquifers is of great concern to the EAC. Reducing consumption through education seems a best practice that we should continue to implement.

4. Waste Reduction

The EAC appreciates the moving of several composting goals from tier 2 to tier 1. More education and incentives are a good investment toward helping residential and commercial customers move toward composting and will achieve the lower GHG emissions target. This could also aid in addressing the current waste management challenges.

5. Urban Greening

The EAC would like to see the conservation of mature trees given a higher emphasis than the planting of new trees. Maintaining existing trees is a critical component to sequestering carbon. If the city can quantify the GHG sequestration of a mature tree, then the city would have a greater and quantifiable incentive to preserve mature trees.