



To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Berkeley Energy Commission

Submitted by: Bentham Paulos, Chairperson, Energy Commission

Subject: Recommendations for Workplan for New Environment and Climate Commission

The Council has approved the creation of a new Environment and Climate Commission to be the successor to the Energy Commission and the Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC), with the transition expected to happen in April 2022.

We fully anticipate the new commission will establish its own workplan, but to aid in the continuity of mission, the Energy Commission would like to make the following recommendations for strategic objectives and activities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The new Environment and Climate Commission should strive to ensure that Berkeley, at the very least, achieves its Climate Action Plan goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 33% below 2000 levels by 2020, and is on track to achieve its 2050 Climate Action Plan goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% below 2000 levels, while avoiding unintended side effects.

We recommend activities in the following areas:

1. Reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions
2. Promote greenhouse gas emission reductions in the built environment
3. Promote and support City wide greenhouse gas reduction and funding plans

ACTIVITIES

To advance each of these objectives, the Commission should focus on the following specific activities over the next year.

Objective 1. Reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions

- Ensure the City is adequately staffed to implement transportation-related activities that reduce carbon emissions, such as by hiring an Electric Mobility coordinator. Priority staff items for the Electric Mobility Roadmap include:

Recommendations for the Environment and Climate Commission

- Conducting a mobility needs assessment
- Convening an electric mobility roadmap implementation working group
- Pursuing discounts and digital access strategies for electric shared mobility options
- Track progress and provide input on implementation of the Electric Mobility Roadmap, the Bicycle Master Plan, the Pedestrian Plan, Vision Zero, and other City plans to encourage non-car mobility.
- Study and support expanding transportation measures to reduce GHG emissions associated with car travel.
 - Promote safe and convenient cycling through a protected and connected bike lane network, docked and dockless bike share systems, public e-bike charging, and secure bike parking.
 - Promote safe routes to schools, beginning with opportunities for the Energy Commission to contribute to the 2x2 committee (Council and BUSD board).
 - Research the feasibility of a zero-emissions zone, or a car-free zone for Berkeley.
 - Investigate opportunities to cut emissions through mass transit, such as more frequent service, new routes, zero-carbon fuels, and lower fare prices.
- Work with the Transportation and Public Works commissions to investigate new approaches to public, curbside, or neighborhood charging for residents without access to on-site charging, focusing on commercial or public ownership of chargers, dedicated street parking spots for EV charging, and/or low-cost connections to the grid.
- Work with the Transportation and Public Works Commissions to integrate the climate aspects of transportation with other transportation issues. Consider asking the Council to create a standing joint committee, or convening joint meetings.
- Engage with Council to include language in City bond measures to finance and build low-carbon, equitable, safe, and convenient transportation infrastructure. This could include building safe streets for bicyclists and pedestrians, funding public EV charging, and improving public transit service. The Commission could host public meetings, promote items from the Berkeley Electric Mobility Roadmap, and analyze impacts.

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Objective 2. Promote greenhouse gas emission reductions in the built environment

- Track progress and provide input on implementation of the Berkeley Existing Building Electrification Strategy (BEBES), including funding for the equity pilot program, staffing needs, and renovation reach codes.
- Recommend strategies the City can pursue to reduce the cost of electrification and for partial electrification measures, such as codes that require two-way heat pumps instead of central air conditioners, deployment of portable heat pumps and low voltage water heaters, and “Watt diet” measures to avoid electrical panel upgrades.
- Investigate and advance time of sale opportunities for electrification and energy efficiency, including a transfer tax rebate program for energy improvements and the allocation of transfer tax revenues towards expanding building electrification in LMI and renter communities.
- Investigate and advance electrification mandates, such as through the Building Energy Savings Ordinance (BESO)
- Support municipal building electrification and energy efficiency upgrades and development of municipal green building programs, including the City’s work with EBCE to install solar + storage systems on critical facilities to provide resilience during outages.
- Explore ways to redirect funds used to maintain PG&E’s fossil gas distribution network to support building electrification.

Objective 3. Promote and support City wide greenhouse gas reduction plans

- Track and provide input on implementation of the Pilot Climate Equity Action Fund and seek funding sources to provide ongoing support. Identify options to support the Fund from existing or expanded City revenues. Solicit input from experts and conduct public meetings to study funding mechanisms, such as a gross-receipts tax, parcel tax, utility users tax, or building emissions tax. Explore options to split the collection of the Utility Users Tax to make it possible to charge separate rates for natural gas and electricity.
- Review and provide input on staff’s annual report to Council on Climate Action Plan progress and recommend further actions. Explore the feasibility of expanding the Plan to cover “scope 3” or consumption-based emissions that occur outside of city limits, and research policies to reduce them. Work with staff to better measure and track progress and create a public dashboard to report key metrics.
- Promote the use of renewable energy by advising Council on EBCE activities including electricity mix, default offerings, local programs, and opportunities to advance City priorities.

Recommendations for the Environment and Climate Commission

General Activities

- Monitor Council actions related to environment and climate change, encourage Commissioners to communicate with individual Councilmembers, and make timely recommendations on relevant items. Advise Council on the climate implications of decisions across the whole of City actions, like procurement and planning.
- Assign Commissioners to serve as formal liaisons to Public Works and Transportation Commissions, and other Commissions as needed, which will involve tracking their agendas and attending meetings.
- Convene joint meetings with other Commissions on specific topics of mutual interest, intended to lead to joint recommendations to Council.
- Amplify awareness of funding gaps for climate action, and develop and support initiatives to raise new or allocate existing funding dedicated to reducing GHG emissions

While the combined Environment and Climate Commission will have a broader agenda than the Energy Commission, we strongly recommend putting a strong emphasis on retaining and improving Berkeley's leadership on climate action.

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