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Austin City Council Moves Toward Renewable Energy Goals By Approving Another Solar Contract

Solar facility to bring renewable power to over 23,000 homes in the Travis County area

AUSTIN, Texas - On Thursday morning, in a 9 -1 vote, Austin City Council approved a Austin Energy utility-scale solar contract for a 144 MW solar power plant to be located southeast of Pflugerville. When the project is completed in 2020, along with additional contracted solar and wind projects, the utility will have nearly 940 MWs of utility-scale solar under contract and will generate more than 52 percent of all energy demand from renewable energy sources.

In addition to the Elgin Independent School District, the solar plant will contribute millions in property taxes to Travis County, Travis County Healthcare District, Austin Community College District, and the Travis County Emergency Services District.

In response to the approved solar contract, Sierra Club volunteer, solar advocate and local resident Al Braden stated:

“After investing in several massive solar plants out in West Texas, with the last contract just this past December, Austin Energy worked to find a project closer to home. Local renewable generation means less reliance on coal and gas plants during peak demand times like the hot summer we just had, no emissions and no need to use water for power. It also reduces cloud cover risk - being 400 miles from our other major solar sites.”

Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter Conservation Director Cyrus Reed stated:

“This is the latest commitment made by Austin Energy to meet both Austin’s overall renewable goals that commit the utility to at least 65% renewable energy by 2027 and an end to coal use by 2023. This contract is a better deal than previous contracts for utility-scale solar in Travis County because Austin Energy is purchasing it at lower prices, and unlike the West Texas contracts, there will not be congestion issues or a loss of power in transmission. This will in turn save Austin ratepayers money on their energy bills. CPS Energy should learn from Austin Energy’s experience and periodically put out RFPs for large-scale wind, solar and storage. The costs are far less than they assume.”

Austin Energy agreed to pay the solar developer an estimated \$11 million per year over the next

15 years for all of the energy produced at the plant. While the actual per MWh cost is confidential, it is believed to be below market peak prices at \$40 per MWh.