

Talking Points

- Austin Energy's "Resource Generation and CO2 Plan" is an effort to reduce the city's carbon footprint by 35 percent by implementing more renewable energy resources over the next 10 years.
- There is no federal or state mandate that requires utilities or cities to meet this goal.
- If implemented, this plan to reduce emissions will cause utility bills to rise an additional 22 percent for residents and 19 percent for businesses.
- Whether or not this plan is adopted, utility rates are going to drastically increase in the next few years. Bottom line: we may be looking at rates increasing up to 50 percent in the next five years, and even more in 10 years. There are three additional cost increases unrelated to the "Resource Generation and CO2 Plan":
 1. New transmission lines are being built in Texas. The total cost is projected to be \$8 billion. Austin Energy will be billed 4% of the total cost. All customers will share in this new cost. Austin Energy's first year bill for these new transmission lines is ~\$5M/yr or (\$7.20/yr for the average residential customer and up to as much as \$150K for some schools and commercial customers). These new additional transmission cost will increase nine times to ~\$45M/yr by 2014.
 2. Announced Base Rate increase by October 1, 2012. Austin Energy hasn't increased its base rates since 1994.
 3. Fuel increases due to recent renewable solar and biomass generation contracts signed which will increase customers bills ~11.5% in the next three years.
- The Catholic Diocese of Austin must concern itself with preserving life and the dignity of people. We recognize that human dignity is not upheld if there is not breathable air or drinkable water. However, we cannot forget our obligation to the poor and most vulnerable in society.
- Currently, requests for utility assistance are one of the top reasons people call 2-1-1.
- While Austin Energy does have a deferred payment plan, there are many members of our community who cannot even afford the deferred payments and thus seek assistance from Catholic Charities and other charitable organizations.
- Rising utility costs would also significantly affect the finances of churches, private schools and charities, resulting in staff reductions and a narrowed ability to provide assistance to those in need.
- This issue that could have tremendous detrimental consequences especially on those in need.
- The Diocese of Austin favors green energy, but we want to work toward a more prudent plan that takes into account the needs of our poorest people.
- We ask Austin Energy to re-examine its plan by closely looking at the burdening economic impact this could have on all citizens of Austin, before it is presented to the Austin City Council on a date to be determined.

If the protection of the environment involves costs, they should be justly distributed, taking due account of the different levels of development of various countries and the need for solidarity with future generations.

Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, December 2007

