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Everything's Bigger in Texas, Including Solar

Austin City Council Approves Construction of Largest Solar Power Array in America

AUSTIN - Today the Austin City Council approved a contract to build a thirty megawatt utility scale solar plant, which would be the largest photovoltaic installation in the United States. Local advocates praised the decision as a major step towards making Texas a world solar leader.

"We don't settle for less than the best in Texas," said Luke Metzger, Director of Environment Texas. "Today the city of Austin made a major investment in the green economy that will pay dividends in jobs, economic development and environmental protection."

The solar array will produce enough electricity to power about 5,000 homes and will eliminate 180,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually. At a cost of \$250 million, the investment locks in fuel prices for 25 years (estimated at approximately 16.5 cents per kilowatt hour), a significant hedge against the anticipated rise in cost of fossil fuels.

The City Council moved to approve a power purchasing agreement with Gemini Solar Development Company, who will own the plant, with three additional directions. The first is a provision that any federal stimulus funds, rebates, or incentives recovered will be passed on to the City of Austin, rather than accrued solely by Gemini. The second is to roll power purchased through this agreement into Austin's Green Choice program, so that citizens will be able to voluntarily opt in to solar's stable energy price. The council will also create a new, all inclusive stakeholder task force to review future energy projects.

"The City Council showed remarkable discretion and patience through a laborious process in vetting this proposal," said David Power, Deputy Director of Public Citizen's Texas Office. "In the end the Council came out with the results Austin needs - the largest photovoltaic array in the nation - and is well on its way to achieving its stated renewable energy goals. President Obama should be proud."

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