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CLACKAMAS COUNTY

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

CLIMATE LENS

Fall 2023



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SSG

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

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Introduction

Welcome to the Clackamas County Climate Lens. This lens is a tool to assess proposed projects, service level changes, operational changes, policies and other initiatives in relation to the proposal's impacts on the county's climate goals.

The county's Climate Action Plan outlines its commitment to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and being more resilient in the face of a changing climate. The goal of the plan is for the county to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. Specifically, the Climate Action Plan outlines steps to:

1. Support the decrease in community-wide greenhouse gas emissions in emissions-producing sectors (buildings, transportation, energy generation, and waste);
2. Support the decrease in community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by increasing sequestration; and
3. Support a decrease in consumption-based emissions.

To implement the plan and attain these goals, the climate lens was created to understand how decisions around projects, services, operations, policies and other initiatives will impact the work of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

How does the climate lens work?

This climate lens focuses on emissions reductions, which gives staff the opportunity to qualitatively assess the impact of a project, service, operational change, policy or other initiative in relation to the county's goals to reduce consumption-based emissions and reach carbon neutral by 2050.

The lens is a series of questions that are explored at the start of and throughout a project, initiative or decision-making process. If you are considering these questions, please note the following:

- Most projects or services will be either impacted by climate change, impact climate change or both; however in some cases sections of the climate lens will not be applicable. If that is the case, please select "no change" and explain why.
- If you are evaluating awarding an RFP (request for proposals), a request for direction to apply for funding, or entering into a funding agreement, complete the climate lens section based on the subject of the RFP or funding proposal.
- You do not need to be an expert in climate action to use the climate lens; just follow the tips listed below. If you need assistance, contact staff in the Sustainability and Solid Waste Program (housed in the Department of Transportation and Development).
- See Appendix A for examples to guide your assessment of the emissions reduction potential of the proposal you are evaluating. Be sure to provide project-specific details in the comments about how your project, service or policy will or will not contribute to climate mitigation and to what degree.

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CLIMATE LENS

Climate Lens

In relation to the proposed project, service, policy, operations or other initiative, consider the following:

1. How does it or would it contribute to achieving the county's carbon neutrality goal and broader climate action objectives? (Consider short-term and long-term, as well as local and global impacts).
2. Are climate mitigation and adaptation measures integrated into the process? If so, please provide specific examples. If not, please explain why not.
3. What estimated greenhouse gas emissions and/or reduction potential are associated with the proposal?
4. How does the proposal compare to other options in terms of climate impact? What factors were considered in selecting this option?
5. Are there any opportunities to enhance the proposal's climate benefits and, if so, what are the associated costs and implications?
6. How will it be monitored and evaluated to ensure its climate impact aligns with the county's carbon neutrality goal and climate action plan?
7. What measures are in place to ensure that it remains resilient and will be able to adapt to changing climate conditions and future climate risks?
8. How have you, or are you planning, to communicate the climate considerations to stakeholders?
9. How does it engage with and address the concerns of vulnerable populations and ensure equitable access to the benefits of climate action?

Climate Lens in Action – Application Examples

Case Study One

A city in Oregon recently implemented a climate lens in its local government policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). One of the measures it implemented was to encourage the use of electric vehicles to reduce the carbon footprint of the city.

However, the city faced a challenge when it needed to transport crucial medical supplies to its public health clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic. The supplies were time-sensitive and required urgent delivery, and the only available option was a single gasoline-powered van.

Despite the fact that the van would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, the city recognized the importance of prioritizing public health measures and decided to use the van for the deliveries.

However, the city also took measures to offset the emissions produced by the van by implementing other policies, such as encouraging the increased use of public transportation, telecommuting, and investing in renewable energy sources.

By taking a holistic approach to climate action, the city was able to prioritize public health

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measures while still working towards its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This case study demonstrates that applying a climate lens does not have to obstruct other important initiatives, but instead can be used to make smart decisions that balance multiple priorities.

Project, service, policy, operation or other initiative under consideration: Use of gasoline van to deliver time-sensitive medical supplies to public health clinics during COVID-19 pandemic
1. How does it contribute to the county's carbon neutrality goal and broader climate action objectives? (Consider short-term and long-term, global and local impacts)
The project contributes to community health resiliency, while at the same time uses a vehicle that is gasoline powered. Mitigating factors for this are included below.
2. Are climate mitigation and adaptation measures integrated into it? If so, please provide specific examples. If not, please explain why not.
Yes. The city has decided to offset the emissions from the van through the promotion of increased public transit, generation of renewable energy, and telecommuting. These mitigating factors have the potential to go beyond offsetting the GHGs emitted from the van.
3. What estimated greenhouse gas emissions and/or reduction potential are associated with it?
These could be calculated at the end of the year, based on gasoline purchase data (if collected), combined with the emissions factor for gasoline in the city's climate action plan.
4. How does it compare to other options in terms of climate impact? What factors were considered in selecting this option?
There are no other options.
5. Are there any opportunities to enhance its climate benefits and, if so, what are the associated costs and implications?
No, the mitigating factors make up for the emissions emitted.
6. How will it be monitored and evaluated to ensure its climate impact aligns with the County's carbon neutrality goal and climate action plan?
If gasoline purchase data for the van isn't currently collected, it needs to be. Monitoring and reporting on the mitigating factors should also be considered.
7. What measures are in place to ensure that it remains resilient and will be able to adapt to changing climate conditions and future climate risks?
The fleet is scheduled to become all electric as part of the city's climate action plan and this transition of the fleet will include the van.

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8. How have you, or are you planning, to communicate the climate considerations to stakeholders?
As we look at long-term planning for emergency response, we will continue to look for further ways to meet these needs in climate friendly ways, in discussion with our Public Health Advisory Council and funders, balancing a variety of needs.
9. How does it engage with and address the concerns of vulnerable populations and ensure equitable access to the benefits of climate action?
It directly benefits them.

Case Study Two

Clackamas County adopted an online permitting system for the public to access development services from the convenience of their home or office without having to come to the county offices in Oregon City. The system, known as Development Direct, was adopted in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has continued and expanded since then.

The system allows people to go through the entire process of applying for and receiving building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, site development, right of way and utility permits online.

Prior to the pandemic, the department required customers to provide paper submittals of permit applications and supporting documents. This was challenging for the customer because up to seven internal workgroups and a variety of outside service districts need to review the materials. Customers were required to facilitate the process by driving to county offices, providing multiple paper copies of documents, and walking through up to seven work areas to submit their applications and plans.

This case study demonstrates how to use a lens on a project that is initiated for a reason that seems independent of climate action.

Project, service, policy, operation or other initiative under consideration: Adopting an online permit system for development services customers.
1. How does it contribute to the county's carbon neutrality goal and broader climate action objectives? (Consider short-term and long-term, global and local impacts)
It reduces vehicle emissions by allowing customers to do business from home that previously would have required them to drive back and forth to the county offices in Oregon City. Electronic submissions eliminates multiple paper copies of plans and documents throughout the life cycle of the project.
2. Are climate mitigation and adaptation measures integrated into it? If so, please provide specific examples. If not, please explain why not.
Yes, but indirectly because this is not thought of primarily as a climate project. This is an unintended positive consequence of applying the lens.

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3. What estimated greenhouse gas emissions and/or reduction potential are associated with it?

This could be figured by estimated the average number of people in a year who now do not need to come to the county offices, picking an average number of miles of driving that would be saved and multiplying that by the amount of emissions usually created by that much travel.

The paper savings could be calculated by taking the average amount of paper used for each type of permit application, multiplying this by the number of applications submitted and applying a factor for the greenhouse gas emissions associated with these documents.

4. How does it compare to other options in terms of climate impact? What factors were considered in selecting this option?

Because of the pandemic, we only considered options that would allow people to continue to conduct their development business without in-person contact.

We will not be considering going back to the previous paper-based system.

5. Are there any opportunities to enhance its climate benefits and, if so, what are the associated costs and implications?

Climate benefits will be enhanced as we continue to expand this program to encompass other development services such as septic and planning. The primary costs of expansion are purchase/maintenance of the software. There are also costs related to electricity used as part of the cloud hosting (SaaS) of the software. The County could consider offsets related to the electrical usage to lessen the climate impacts of the software.

6. How will it be monitored and evaluated to ensure its climate impact aligns with the County's carbon neutrality goal and climate action plan?

We track the number of people we serve both in-person and remotely to evaluate the reduction in driving based emissions. We will determine if a calculation can be performed to monitor the saving related to using electronic verses paper submittal packages. If offsets are purchased to account for server emissions these could be added into the ongoing monitoring of the project.

7. What measures are in place to ensure that it remains resilient and will be able to adapt to changing climate conditions and future climate risks?

We continue to evaluate the system and modify it, as needed and feasible, to better meet the needs of our customers. It saves our customers time to be able to work with us online, so we will continue to work to make that as easy and accessible as possible.

Considering the carbon emissions related to the electrical usage could also address adaption. As climate conditions change the evaluation of electrical usage could be expanded to partner with customers for them to also purchase offsets.

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8. How have you, or are you planning, to communicate the climate considerations to stakeholders?
We have publicized the time savings to customers of not having to come into the office; we can add to that energy savings/emissions reductions of not having to drive back and forth to Oregon City and the amount of paper saved as part of submitting materials online.
9. How does it engage with and address the concerns of vulnerable populations and ensure equitable access to the benefits of climate action?
It allows anyone to access our services quickly and without extensive travel, if they have access to a computer. It also allows submittals outside of "regular" business hours so those who cannot take time away from work or family can apply for permits. To address technology barriers the system is accessible from libraries and other public computers as the software is cloud hosted.

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Appendix A

Guide to Emissions Reduction

Use the examples below to guide you in considering the emissions reductions of the project, service, policy, operations or other initiative you are reviewing with the lens. Be sure to provide specific details in the lens analysis about how your project, service, policy, operation or other initiative will or will not contribute to climate mitigation and to what degree.

Moderate to significant contribution to the carbon neutral target:

- Replacing gas or diesel vehicles or equipment with hybrid, electric, hydrogen (green), or other low emissions technology
- Generating renewable energy by adding rooftop or ground-mount solar panels, adding a wind turbine, converting biomethane to renewable natural gas at wastewater treatment facilities, etc.
- Replacing building components such as heating and cooling systems with more efficient models
- Retrofitting the interior or exterior of an existing building including adding insulation, replacing windows and doors, etc.

Revising operations or procedures that directly result in reduced energy use, such as:

- Developing an ongoing work-from-home policy
- Reducing operating hours at a facility due to service needs or usage (e.g., closing a recreation center an hour earlier if there is low usage)
- Changing driving habits based on data

Enabling greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the community through infrastructure decisions, such as:

- Installing new bike lanes
- Installing electric vehicle charging stations
- Providing 'last-mile' commuter solutions

Enabling greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the community through policy decisions, such as:

- Requiring electric vehicle charging infrastructure in site plans for commercial and multi-unit developments
- Changing parking minimums to parking maximums, or lowering parking minimums

Small to moderate contribution to the carbon neutral target:

- Natural sequestration, such as:
  - Net addition of trees or shrubs
  - Restoring or enhancing natural assets such as grasslands and wetlands

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- Encouraging the reduction or diversion of solid waste through policies and operations, such as:
  - Enhancing composting and recycling services
  - Increasing fees for garbage collection

Actions that have little or no impact on reaching the carbon neutral target:

- Completing a like-for-like replacement of a vehicle or piece of equipment, such as:
  - Replacing a furnace with a similar model
  - Replacing a gasoline vehicle with another gasoline vehicle
- Commissioning a study, developing a plan, and/or collecting data (even though the information, results, or recommendations, if implemented, may lead to actions that reduce emissions), such as:
  - Collecting data on fuel usage
  - Renewing the county's master plans
- Modifying policies or operations that do not involve the use of fossil fuels or grid-purchased electricity, such as:
  - Purchasing land
  - Reallocating staff resources

Actions that are counter to the County's carbon neutral target:

If your project, service, operation, policy or other initiative falls into this category, please include details about the trade-offs (e.g., what other benefits might the project bring) and what other county priorities will benefit from this proposal.

- A direct or indirect increase in fossil fuels or electricity required beyond current use, such as the net new addition of a building, vehicle, or piece of equipment that does not use emissions-free energy
- A change in operations that results in increased energy use, such as:
  - Increasing the operating hours of a building, vehicle, or piece of equipment
  - Switching to a more emissions-intensive fuel from a less emissions-intensive fuel
  - Switching out a piece of equipment or building component for a less efficient model

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