

Memorandum from Jones and Arenas



Memorandum

**TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE**

FROM: Vice Mayor Chappie
Jones, Council Member
Sylvia Arenas

**SUBJECT: CUT THE COMMUTE
PLEDGE**

DATE: October 7, 2020

APPROVED: *Chappie Jones*

DATE: October 1, 2020

Sylvia Arenas

RECOMMENDATION

City of San José as an organization shall pledge to join Bay Area Quality Management District's "Cut the Commute" Campaign as a continued effort to reduce traffic congestion, help maintain our air quality progress, reduce employer and employee costs, and reduce climate impacts. As the County's shelter-in-place order eases and lifts accordingly, the City shall commit to extending remote work options of at least 25% (or at least 1-2 days) to employees whose jobs allow for it in accordance with the City's Administrative Policy 4.2.14 on Flexible Workplace. For those employees that don't have that flexibility, the organization will encourage alternatives to driving alone.

In support of Cut the Commute, direct City Manager and Administration to evaluate and update as needed the following:

- 1) Applicable and new City Administrative Policies needed to ensure remote access and necessary IT tools to maintain continued security and privacy protections while enabling high employee workforce productivity and effective service delivery for the purposes of remote work or telecommuting;
- 2) Commuter Benefits Program – expand the commuter benefits program to include Transportation Demand Management Coordinators roles that would continue promotion of Green Trip Challenges, transit pass program, and other programs such as the Sustainable Commute Incentive Pilot Program, to maximize employee carpools, tax benefits, and use of alternative modes of transportation;
- 3) Collaboration with community organizations to encourage:
 - a. The increased use of public transit and alternative forms of transportation;

- b. Small and medium sized businesses in City of San José to join BAAQMD's Cut the Commute Campaign through Office of Economic Development's Business Owner Space and the Mayor's Silicon Valley Recovery Roundtable;
- 4) Cost and benefits analysis if City were to implement a 25% remote-work option for employees whose jobs allow for it;
- 5) Equity considerations for telecommuting between different occupations and disproportionate opportunities;
- 6) Sign the pledge;
- 7) Draft a resolution based on the attached template;
- 8) Place the item on the Tuesday, October 20, 2020 Council Agenda for action and consideration of the Resolution in support of the Cut the Commute Campaign.

DISCUSSION

In light of COVID-19 we have been given the opportunity to rethink and improve efficiencies in some of our programs, processes, and daily activities. Considering the City of San José has already significantly invested in making large-scale remote work feasible during the pandemic, it would be a natural action for the City of San José to join the regional effort to Cut the Commute and do its part in contributing to the continued reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG's). Let's leverage that effort and the lessons learned since the shelter-in-place order took effect March 17, 2020 to improve our climate, quality of life, economy, and society.

To clarify, it is not suggested to continue the current level of remote work, but to continue an aspect of it, specifically at a 25% level, upon the ease or lift of the shelter-in-place, for the benefit of our environment and quality of life. We are all looking forward to going back to the office where we meet and connect with our colleagues in-person instead of virtually. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore that transitioning to remote work with a little more than one day a week per employee and reducing the overall number of single-occupancy vehicle trips potentially may bring many ongoing benefits. According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and their Board President/Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez, some of these benefits include:

- **Cleaner air:** The Bay Area saw a 32% reduction in CO2 emissions in just the first seven weeks of the crisis.
- **Reduced traffic congestion:** The average time for Silicon Valley residents to get to work has risen by 25% in the last 15 years. BAAQMD estimated that the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders resulted in a decrease of an estimated 70% of Bay area vehicle miles traveled in the first three months.
- **Improved quality of life:**
 - Saves money and time spent in traffic
 - Improved employee recruitment, retention, and productivity
 - Enhanced employee wellness and work-life balance
- **Safer roads:** Joint Venture Silicon Valley found that between the early March and the first week of May, Bay Area injury crashes declined by 63%.
- **Cost savings on real estate and construction costs:** Stanford University saved more than \$107 million between 2002-2012 just in parking facilities they did not have to build.

- **Disaster preparedness:** Remote work provides a blueprint for how to effectively continue business during a future emergency.

Just as the pandemic has highlighted inequalities across all sectors of our society, one must not ignore the impact and equity considerations of telecommuting on different occupations. Several studies have shown disproportionate opportunities for telecommuting between different occupations. Thus, for those who do not have the flexibility to work from home, the City shall encourage and promote alternatives to driving alone in accordance with the Bay Area Commuter Benefits Programs, which is a state legislated program that requires employers with 50 or more full-time employees to offer commuter benefits to their employees as an effort to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. As of September 30, 2014, qualifying employers are required to register and offer commuter benefits to their employees. Employers must select one of four Commuter Benefit options, such as transit, ridesharing, bicycling, or walking, to offer their employees. In fact, BAAQMD is currently considering strengthening the definition of telecommuting as an eligible option to meet the requirements of the Commuter Benefits Program.

The pandemic has also highlighted that our most vulnerable neighborhoods in San Jose have died from COVID-19 at disproportionate rates – specifically in zip codes located in East San Jose. Underserved communities in East San Jose, are disproportionately affected by lung and health complications due to the exposure of elevated and unhealthy air pollution. By pledging to the “Cut the Commute” Campaign, we also commit to promoting public transit and delivering on the delayed connection of public transit in East San José to the rest of the City.

Extending a remote work policy in accordance with the City’s Flexible Workplan Policy after the pandemic subsides will require coordination and implementation of several components to ensure adoption and success. In addition, it may also require a meet and confer process. Consequently, BAAQMD’s Cut the Commute Pledge aligns with several policies and goals of the City aimed at improving sustainability, reducing GHG emissions, and supporting employee wellness and work-life balance. For Example, in Climate Smart San José’s goals, it is included that by 2040, only four out of ten commute trips in San José will be taken in single occupancy vehicles. Evaluating changes to the City’s Transportation Demand Management requirements will help us achieve this goal.

According to General Plan Goal TR7, the City currently prioritizes the implementation of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program that includes minimizing vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled. The goal specifically includes updating and enhancing “the existing TDM program for City of San José employees. This program includes the expansion of transit pass subsidies, free shuttle service, preferential carpool parking, ridesharing, flexible work schedules, parking pricing, car-sharing, bicycle sharing, and other measures.” The City currently implements several of these options. In light of joining Cut the Commute Campaign, it is suggested to evaluate the progress made on this goal and outcomes of current City programs, such as the Green Trip Challenge, which is an annual competition between departments to see which department can log the most “green” trips per employee, and the 2018 Sustainable Commute Incentive Pilot Program, in which Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services employees were offered \$4 a day, every day they commuted by means other than driving alone over the duration of about four months. Administration should consider implementing additional programs and providing sufficient staffing to implement a program such as coordinated carpooling or promotion of bike routes and employee tax benefits for using alternate forms of transit through a TDM coordinator.

The Cities Association of Santa Clara County, a collaboration of the 15 cities in Santa Clara County, has signed the pledge and has requested for all 15 member cities in the County to join the campaign. As of September 25, other jurisdictions that have joined the campaign include the County of Santa Clara, and the cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Monte Sereno, and Los Altos Hills. The City of San José is an organization of over 6,000 people. Collectively we have the potential to lead and make a difference in our region as a public agency by joining the campaign and ensuring a better and sustainable future for our residents and the region.

SPARE THE AIR CUT THE COMMUTE PLEDGE

The shelter-in-place orders issued to protect the public from the spread of COVID-19 necessitated a major shift in how Bay Area employers operate, and many employees quickly made the adjustment to remote work.

As shelter-in-place orders are eased or lifted, let's rethink how we conduct business and consider the substantial benefits remote work can bring to us all:

- Cleaner air and reduced climate impacts
- Reduces traffic congestion
- Saves money and time spent in traffic
- Improves employee recruitment, retention and productivity
- Saves money on commercial real estate and parking facilities
- Enhanced employee work-life balance
- Resiliency— Provides a blueprint to continue business during a crisis

The benefits of remote work are numerous. All that is needed now is leadership, vision and commitment.

Are you ready to step forward and adopt an innovative remote work policy after the shelter-in-place? By signing this pledge, your company or organization commits to extending remote work options by at least 25% (or 1-2 days a week) for employees whose work requirements allow for that flexibility, though you can pledge more! For those employees that don't have that flexibility, your company or organization will encourage alternatives to driving alone.

Help improve air quality and quality of life for all Bay Area residents!

Name (first/last)

Title

Company

City

Signature

Date



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

Commute Free Tomorrow Draft Remote Work Resolution

WHEREAS, climate change and air pollution, caused by the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and fine particulates from automobiles with combustion engines, represents a profound threat to the Bay Area's air quality, public health, environment, and economy;

WHEREAS, NO_x is a noxious gas that has been linked to respiratory problems and other health conditions and also reacts with other chemicals in the atmosphere to form fine particulate pollution, and fine particulate matter;

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average gasoline passenger vehicle emits .89 of a pound of CO₂ per mile;

WHEREAS, about 1 in 12 workers in the Bay Area are super commuters and drive more than 90 minutes each way to and from work;

WHEREAS, the average Bay Area household spends \$13,350 a year on transportation;

WHEREAS, the California Highway Patrol reported 197,146 fatal and injury traffic crashes statewide in 2017;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders issued to protect the public from the spread of COVID-19 necessitated a shift in how Bay Area employers operate, and many employees quickly made the adjustment to remote work;

WHEREAS, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District estimated that the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders resulted in a decrease of an estimated 70% of Bay Area vehicle miles traveled in the first three months, which resulted in estimated reductions in total emissions of 15% for fine particulates, 30% for NO_x and 20% for CO₂;

WHEREAS, the Commuter Benefits Program is mandatory for all employers in the Bay Area with 50 or more full-time employees, per Senate Bill 1128, and remote work qualifies to meet the program requirements;

WHEREAS, the option to work from home or another off-site location is critical to reducing single occupancy vehicle trips;

WHEREAS, there will be employees post COVID-19 who will not be able to work remotely, but could use public transportation if applicable options are available;

WHEREAS, the increase of the use of public transportation reduces the number of single occupant vehicle trips;

WHEREAS, people are more inclined to use public transportation if it is faster than driving in a single occupancy vehicle and cities and counties can increase the speed of public transportation through land use decisions;

WHEREAS, the increase in bike lanes and other land use decisions, such as the inclusion of complete streets, increases safety and the perception of safety thereby increasing the number of people who will use bicycles to meet their transportation needs;

WHEREAS, the increase in bicycle and pedestrian travel has been shown to provide population-level health benefits and reduced health care costs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the _____ that the _____ strongly supports the goal of reducing single occupancy vehicle trips in the Bay Area, and supports the implementation of policies that will increase options, incentives and abilities for employees to use public transit and other alternative modes of transit.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the _____ that the _____ hereby gives direction to staff to develop an analysis and recommendations related to increasing the number of employees who are able to work remotely.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the _____ that the _____ also hereby gives direction to staff to implement transportation demand management measures that encourage and incentivize the reduction of single occupancy vehicles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the _____ that the _____ also hereby direct staff to develop an analysis and recommendations related to increasing the success of public transit through land use policies that reduce the need for single occupancy vehicles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the _____ that the _____ also strongly supports advocating for measures that increase public funding for public transit in order to compensate for reduction in fare box revenue due to employees working remotely and to ensure that public transportation is available for those who cannot afford private transportation and those who prefer public transportation.