



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20230607-007

Date: 06/07/2023

Subject: Requesting an Environmental Study on the environmental impact of rescinding work-from-home telework and having city employees commute to a city-owned office

Motion by: Harris Qureshi

Seconded by: Kevin Ramberg

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes that the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan aims to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases by encouraging telework and work-from-home initiatives.

WHEREAS, Travis County has implemented a work-from-home policy for 75% of the employees.

WHEREAS, Austin City Council initiated a similar study in June 2022 to be completed in September 2022.

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes that the City of Austin's vision for net zero emissions by 2040 prioritizes greenhouse gas emission reduction and calls for 50% of trips to be made by using public transit, biking, walking, carpooling, or avoided altogether by working from home.

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes that the Climate Equity Plan states that climate impacts are not felt equally across all communities and that the City of Austin's Interim City Manager's recent orders to revoke work-from-home will primarily impact employees who may not be able to afford transportation costs, child care, and other expenses related to commuting while inflation and affordability issues continue to be of concern when recruiting and retaining city staff.

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes that the Interim City Manager's recent orders are partially meant to stimulate economic activity in the City of Austin near its currently underutilized commercial spaces and that allowing local startups and creative classes to take advantage of the underutilized city office space as incubators and accelerators for their businesses may provide more long-term economic benefits to the City of Austin than having public workers and city staff drive into an office for their 9-5,

THEREFORE, the Environmental Commission recommends that Austin City Council direct the Interim City Manager to conduct a comprehensive and holistic study before further rescinding work-from-home telework and having employees commute to a city-owned office and that the study should: examine the full environmental impact between the current policy, the Interim City Manager's proposed policy, and a 100% telework as default policy; consider policy and technology changes that expand or improve the city's ability to offer its employees safe, effective and efficient remote work-from-home options; and explore other options on what to do with the under-utilized commercial office spaces owned/operated by the city to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and boost the local economy.

VOTE: 9-0

For: Kevin Ramberg, Perry Bedford, Rick Brimer, Hanna Cofer, Mariana Krueger, Haris Qureshi, Melinda Schiera, Rachel Scott, David Sullivan

Against: None

Abstain: Colin Nickells

Absent: Jennifer Bristol

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KEVIN RAMBERG". The letters are in all caps and have a cursive, slightly slanted appearance. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kevin Ramberg, Environmental Commission Chair