



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Joint Sustainability Committee Recommendation No 20230628-4

Resolution on City Employee Work from Home Policy

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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 disproportionately 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; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is struggling to fill many positions and allowing employees to work remotely is a benefit that costs the city nothing and removing this benefit will likely make recruitment and retention of employees even more challenging, and vacancies result in unfulfilled goals and reduced services, which is not in the community's interest; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan aims to decrease emissions of greenhouse gases by encouraging telework and work-from-home initiatives; and

WHEREAS, driving contributes to the creation of ground-level ozone, which is a harmful air pollutant that causes and contributes to asthma and other respiratory illnesses; and

WHEREAS, driving creates a large amount of plastic pollution from wear on tires and brakes; and

WHEREAS, Travis County has implemented a work-from-home policy and 75% of the employees who are eligible to work from home are doing so; and

WHEREAS, Austin City Council directed the city manager to research the benefits of expanding the telework option for City of Austin employees in June 2022 to be completed in September 2022, but the city manager never delivered results of the study; and

WHEREAS, the Joint Sustainability Committee 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, but 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; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that the Austin City Council direct the Interim City Manager to examine the data collected by Travis County and other similar studies and conduct an evidenced-based assessment before implementing the next phase of in-person work requirements. This assessment should examine the full environmental, affordability and equity impacts between the 2022 policy, the Interim City Manager's proposed policy, and a 100% telework as default policy. The Interim City Manager should 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. This assessment must be presented to the Austin City Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Joint Sustainability Committee recommends that Austin City Council direct the Interim City Manager to evaluate within 6 months the benefits of encouraging City of Austin employees to work from home whenever possible when an Ozone Action Day is forecasted and implement this change as quickly as possible.

Date: June 28, 2023

Motioned By: Heather Houser

Seconded By: Alice Woods

Vote: 12-0

For: Kaiba White, Haris Qureshi, Charlotte Davis, Rodrigo Leal, Christopher Campbell, Lane Becker, Alice Woods, Yure Suarez, Melissa Rothrock, Jon Salinas, Heather Houser, Frances Deviney

Against: None

Abstain: None

Attest:



Rohan Lilauwala, Joint Sustainability Committee Staff Liaison