Section 10.1 Policy and Program Recommendations

1. **Encourage State agencies to develop guidelines for telecommuting for appropriate state employees, giving broad discretion to State agencies on how such an option would be applied.**

   Description

   In 2007, about 12 million U.S. employees "telecommuted" at least 8 hours weekly, double the 6 million employees who telecommuted in 2000.[1] Some employers view telecommuting as a way to reduce their costs associated with office rental and information technology. By eliminating or decreasing the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by employees, telecommuting reduces emissions of CO_2 and other pollutants.

   The Open Work program at Sun Microsystems provides a private-sector example of the benefits of telecommuting. This program, which has been in place for over a decade, allows workers to utilize a range of flexible work environments, including telecommuting. Sun estimates the Open Work program has allowed them to reduce their real estate holdings by more that 15% (2.6 million square feet), maintain productivity during the 2007 California wild-fires, and reduce the company's carbon dioxide emissions by 31,000 tons per year. Additionally, working from home an average of 2.1 days per week was estimated to save more than $1,700 per year in gasoline and vehicle wear.[2]

   The State of Kansas currently employs approximately 40,000 full time employees and 25,000 part-time employees across the state in various state agencies. Of these employees, 40% live a city different from the one in which they work.[3] State agencies have complete discretion in determining whether or not to provided telecommuting opportunities for their individual employees.[4]

   Allowing State government employees to telecommute would not only reduce VMT could help to reduce the state's carbon footprint. also reducing employee's costs associated with gasoline purchases and vehicle wear. It may also improve employee productivity and provide supervisors an additional, no-cost incentive to offer employees they wish to retain. In the case of a natural disaster or emergency, telecommuting could provide for continuity of operations.

   As with any management policies, telecommuting policies should take into consideration the suitability of particular jobs for telecommuting, supervisor's management style, and the personal characteristics and work habits of the employee.

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[1] Eve Tahminciogul, The quiet revolution: telecommuting, MSNBC.com, October 5, 2007: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20281475 (accessed July 2008)

[2] Sun Microsystems, October 2008, Overview Brochure; PDF can be linked from: http://www.sun.com/aboutsun/openwork/index.jsp (accessed December 5, 2008).

[3] Kristine Scott, Department of Administration, personal communication, September 3, 2008.

[4] Department of Administration Division of Personnel Services, August 2008, Bulletin 08-04 State Telecommuting Policy: http://da.ks.gov/ps/documents/bulletins/0804.htm.

Recommended Actions

a. Responsible parties

The Governor should send letters to the leadership of the various state agencies.

b. Legislative action

Legislators should consider adoption of a resolution in support of this recommendation.

c. Budget requirements

No additional funding is requested.

d. Implementation timeline

Letters should be delivered on or before January 31, 2009.

Implications of Proposal

a. Pros

i. May decrease CO_2 and other tailpipe emissions.

ii. May reduce traffic congestion.

iii. Allows State to demonstrate leadership and may encourage private businesses to implement telecommuting options.

iv. May reduce State government operating costs in some instances.

iv. Provides incentives to recruit or retain productive employees.

v. May increase employee productivity.

vi. May provide continuity of operations in the event of a weather events or natural disasters.

b. Cons

i. May be resisted by some managers, agency directors.

ii. Requires supervisors and managers to determine suitability of telecommuting for individual employees.