



Joe Parisi
County Executive

County Of Dane Office Of The County Executive

June 1, 2021
Contact: Ariana Vruwink
608-267-8823

County Executive Parisi: Pandemic Offers Generational Opportunity to Slash Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Dane County Joins Growing List of Employers to Embrace Telecommuting Beyond Covid-19

Dane County Executive Joe Parisi is asking local employers to maintain a high level of telecommuting in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as a way to improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion, and improve workplace productivity.

"The Covid-19 pandemic brought a lot of hurt to families, communities, our country and economy but how we adapted in our workplaces offers the template for true, once in a generation change to substantively address what's happening to our planet," Parisi said. "Some of our busiest roads saw a 40-60% decline in traffic during the peak of the pandemic, and [2020 marked the steepest decline in carbon dioxide emissions globally](#) that we have seen since World War II. We have a real chance here to make a difference for future generations, and in many cases with workplace telecommuting practices already in place—this is just to keep doing what we are doing."

Under Parisi's direction, Dane County has developed remote work and telecommuting policies to allow county managers and their workforces to explore hybrid work arrangements, ensuring service delivery is maintained and even enhanced with less reliance on commuting. The county is exploring the feasibility of telecommuting even a few days of the week for between 650 and 950 employees. Based on average commutes, it's projected that for every 100 county employees who telecommute three days a week over the course of the year the county would reduce carbon emissions by 135 metric tons, saving a combined 337,000 miles in vehicle travel. That's the equivalent of not using 15,200 gallons of gas. If 500 employees work from home three days a week, carbon emissions are lowered by 675 metric tons.

"We live in a progressive community that's well aware of the trendline with the deteriorating health and well-being of our planet," Parisi said. "Before us now is a genuine opportunity, without significant sacrifice, that would be incredibly impactful if employers both large and small did a thorough review of their operations and explored what's truly possible."

"There will be very few times that demands on county services will be as great as they were the past 15 months. Our staff effectively developed and implemented some of the most innovative local government led Covid-19 response programs in the entire country. If they can do that incredibly difficult work under the circumstances in which they did, I have high confidence that telecommuting is sustainable," Parisi concluded.

The Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change issued a roadmap last year to how the county as a whole could reduce carbon emissions in the coming decades. These projections were not based on the opportunities of telecommuting that emerged during the pandemic. The Office will now be modifying its Climate Champions award program to publicly recognize those employers who embrace telecommuting practices that reduce emissions.

###