



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

February 2, 2018

King County's Home Free Guarantee Program Has Sufficient Internal Controls to Mitigate Potential Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

TO:

Metropolitan
King County
Councilmembers

In 2016, King County's Home Free Guarantee program served more than 500 King County employees providing about 1,000 taxi rides in cases of personal emergencies or unexpected overtime. King County provides this program to encourage employees to take public transportation, bike, walk, or carpool to work. Providing a guaranteed way home in the event of an emergency eliminates one of the primary reasons for people to drive alone. In our review of this program, we found that overall, there are sufficient controls in place to mitigate potential, fraud, waste, and abuse.

FROM:

Kymer Waltmunson,
County Auditor

What restrictions are in place to reduce the potential for abusing this program?

There are a number of restrictions on the program to reduce the potential of abuse. For example, employees can only use the service eight times per year and the taxi rides are limited to 60 miles. In order to be eligible for the program, employees must get to work by public transportation, bike, walk, or a shared ride driven by someone else. There are also restrictions on when it can be used. An employee must be in one of the following situations in order to use the service:

- ill, have a child-care emergency, or experience a crisis while at work
- unexpectedly asked by a supervisor to work outside regular work hours
- stranded at work because carpool or vanpool driver had to leave due to an emergency.

How much does this program cost?

King County spent about \$65,000 on this program in 2016. The average fare was \$63.33 and there were 1,021 total rides.

What controls or checks are in place to oversee this program?

This program is administered by King County's Employee Transportation Program Manager. The program manager provides oversight of the Home Free Guarantee program by reviewing the monthly reports provided by the taxi dispatcher. These logs provide information about:



King County

- the reason for the trip
- how the employee traveled to work
- the pick-up and drop-off addresses
- the employee's phone number and ORCA identification number
- the taxi fare.

The program manager reviews whether employees have exceeded eight trips during the calendar year. In cases when an employee exceeds eight trips, the program manager bills the employee or their department for the taxi fares over eight trips. The program manager also reviews the fare paid to approximate the distance of the trip to ensure it is under the standard of 60 miles.

As part of our analysis, we also reviewed number of trips per employee and trip distance in 2016. Our findings are detailed below.

Do employees in certain departments make greater use of this program than others?

Yes, staff in the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD) took more than 40 percent of the total trips. This is by far the largest proportion by any department and more trips are allowed by their bargaining agreement as noted below. It is difficult to determine why such a large proportion of trips are made by DAJD employees. Transit staff managing this program told us, based on the outreach work, DAJD staff are subject to mandatory overtime and many DAJD employees use vanpools. Thus, if an employee's manager requires them to work overtime, the employee's vanpool would leave without the employee, who then needs a ride home or to their car. This assessment was supported by our analysis, which showed that DAJD staff took 399 of the 536 trips (74 percent) taken by county staff in 2016 because of overtime. Additionally, more than 90 percent of all DAJD trips were because of overtime.

EXHIBIT A: Employees in the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention took more than 40 percent of the trips in 2016

Department	Number of trips	Percent of trips
Adult and Juvenile Detention	438	43%
Transportation	106	10%
Public Health	103	10%
Executive Services	94	9%
Natural Resources and Parks	75	7%
Information Technology	38	4%
Prosecuting Attorney's Office	29	3%
Judicial Administration	25	2%
Community and Human Services	23	2%
District Court	19	2%
Sheriff's Office	17	2%
Assessments	12	1%
Public Defense	11	1%



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King County Council	10	1%
Elections	9	1%
Superior Court	8	1%
Executive's Office	4	0%
Total	1021	

Source: Auditor's Office analysis of 2016 Home Free data. Total does not add up to 100% because of rounding.

What reasons did employees provide for using the program?

Overtime was the reason employees gave for needing to use the program more than 50 percent of the time.

EXHIBIT B: Overtime was the primary reason provided by employees for trips in 2016

Reason	Number of trips	Percent of trips
Overtime	536	52%
Health	304	30%
Emergency	115	11%
Other	66	6%
Total	1021	

Source: Auditor's Office analysis of 2016 Home Free data.

Were there cases in which employees took more than eight trips per year? Or trips greater than 60 miles?

Yes, there were 12 employees who took more than eight trips during 2016. These ranged from one employee who took 18 trips to five employees who took nine each. While the program has a rule that employees can take up to eight trips per year, there is a provision in the labor agreement between King County and the King County Corrections Guild that allows jail guards to exceed eight trips as long as they are the direct result of mandatory overtime. Eleven out of the 12 employees who took more than eight trips were covered by this labor agreement. The one exception is being billed by the program manager to the employee whose trips exceeded the limit.

Were there cases in which employees took taxi trips greater than 60 miles?

Another limit the program has is distance. Taxi rides are capped at 60 miles. We analyzed the driving distance for the 2016 trips and found that the longest trip was almost 58 miles, which is under the limit.



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Ben Thompson, Deputy County Auditor, conducted this review. Please contact Ben at 206-477-1035 if you have any questions about the issues discussed in this letter.

cc: Dow Constantine, King County Executive
Caroline Whalen, Interim Chief Operating Officer, Department of Executive Services
Rachel Smith, Chief of Staff, King County Executive's Office
Harold Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Rob Gannon, General Manager, DOT
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget
Ken Guy, Division Director, Department of Executive Services, Finance & Business Operations Division
Julie Long, Executive Assistant, Department of Executive Services
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
Shelley Harrison, Administrative Staff Assistant, King County Executive Office

Statement of Compliance, Scope, Objective & Methodology

Statement of Compliance with Government Auditing Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Scope of Work on Internal Controls

We assessed internal controls relevant to the audit objective. This included review of program terms as well as interviews with knowledgeable staff within the Department of Transportation.

Scope

This performance audit evaluated the taxi rides provided by King County to its employees under the Home Free Guarantee program in from January 2016 to December 2016.

Objective

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the sufficiency of the internal controls for King County's Home Free Guarantee program.

Methodology

To address the audit objective, we reviewed program documentation and conducted data analysis of the taxi rides provided to King County employees in 2016. 2016 is the most recent full year of ride data, therefore, it is the time period we focused on for our analysis.



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Advancing Performance & Accountability

KYMBER WALTMUNSON, KING COUNTY AUDITOR

MISSION Promote improved performance, accountability, and transparency in King County government through objective and independent audits and studies.

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ABOUT US The King County Auditor's Office was created by charter in 1969 as an independent agency within the legislative branch of county government. The office conducts oversight of county government through independent audits, capital projects oversight, and other studies. The results of this work are presented to the Metropolitan King County Council and are communicated to the King County Executive and the public. The King County Auditor's Office performs its work in accordance with Government Auditing Standards.



This audit product conforms to the GAGAS standards for independence, objectivity, and quality.