



King County

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CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

February 27, 2019

The Honorable Rod Dembowski

Chair, King County Council

Room 1200

C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Dembowski:

Climate change is having profound impacts on our health, economy, and environment and the scientific consensus is that we collectively need to do more, faster, to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change documented that global emissions need to be on the steep decline within the next decade to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Closer to home, the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group published a report in January 2019 on the implications of global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius in Washington State, documenting increased risks to human health, salmon populations, agriculture and tourism, and increased risks of coastal flooding and erosion.

We can and must move faster and more aggressively to reduce GHG emissions from County operations. There is no universally accepted definition of carbon neutrality. ***The County's approach and targets should focus on making deep reductions in direct emissions rather than achieving carbon neutrality through purchase of carbon offsets or a reframing of our emissions inventory.***

King County has a long track record of innovation and leadership to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for climate change impacts. King County's 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) established ambitious goals, targets, and priority action commitments for both county operations and at the community scale. Building on the County's leadership, this letter transmits an *Implementation Plan for a Carbon Neutral King County Government* ("Plan"), in accordance with the 2016 King County Comprehensive Plan Workplan Action 9 and consistent with Comprehensive Plan carbon neutral policies.

Based on the analysis we completed for this Plan, I recommend that King County build on existing strategies and establish new, stronger targets to reduce operational GHG emissions by 25 percent by 2020, 50 percent by 2025, and 80 percent by 2030. Meeting these accelerated goals will require ***additional investment*** in actions like fleet electrification and sometimes ***controversial policy choices***. Given that County operational GHG emissions are a small percentage of overall emissions in King County, it is essential that we look at actions in the context of ***community scale emissions*** and focus County efforts and investments where they will have the most impact. We will be completing a 5-year update to the 2015 SCAP by June

2020. We will use this update to refine, prioritize, and formalize stronger goals and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from county operations and in the community as a whole.

The Carbon Neutral Implementation Plan and my recommendation for stronger emissions reduction goals are based on:

- Analysis of the benefits of existing and planned GHG reduction strategies, such as battery bus electrification and purchase of renewable electricity;
- Identification of new strategies that would accelerate progress toward carbon neutrality, such as fleet electrification, deep reductions in fossil fuels used in buildings, and fugitive methane reductions, that when modeled show that it's technically possible to achieve the proposed stronger GHG reduction targets; and
- Preliminary assessment of the feasibility of implementing identified strategies, including cost, health, and equity and social justice benefits and impacts.

The Plan provides background on how countywide carbon neutrality fits in with existing County commitments, options and recommendations for defining carbon neutrality, rationale for why carbon neutrality is important, best practices by other organizations, and details of strategies developed and technical modeling that occurred to support the overall Plan.

Strategies presented in this Plan serve to illustrate the level of effort required to achieve the recommended overall targets. The strategies will be further refined as more information is known about the feasibility, tradeoffs and relative cost of implementation at the community scale. Once the targets and supporting strategies are formally adopted by the County Council in the 2020 SCAP, they will serve as our updated, comprehensive blueprint for achieving carbon neutrality.

The Plan furthers the goals of key County plans and initiatives as follows:

- The King County Strategic Plan goal to reduce countywide GHG emissions by ensuring that King County is doing its part in reducing its operational footprint.
- The King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan by reducing operational GHG emissions and assessing how potential strategies can provide air quality benefits and improve public health for King County residents.
- The SCAP goal to reduce operational GHG emissions.

The Plan and its recommendations were collaboratively developed by staff and leadership of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Metro Transit, and Executive Services.

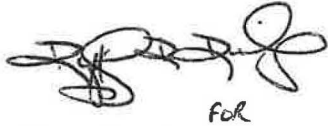
It is estimated that the Plan required 200 staff hours to produce, costing \$20,000. This does not include staff or consultant work or to develop or quantify strategies included in the Plan.

Thank you for considering this Plan. These important recommendations will help guide King County as we continue to lead by example to take action on climate change in ways that are cost effective, maximize benefits to public health, and improve equity and social justice.

The Honorable Rod Dembowski
February 27, 2018
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If you have any questions about this report, please contact Megan Smith, Director of Climate and Energy Initiatives, at 206-263-9605.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dow Constantine".

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff
 Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Rob Gannon, Director, Department of Metro Transit
Caroline Whalen, Director, Department of Executive Services
Megan Smith, Director of Climate and Energy Initiatives, Executive Office