



King County

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King County Executive

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August 25, 2020

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

I am pleased to transmit the 2020 update of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) and a proposed motion acknowledging receipt of the plan as required by Ordinance 18392, Section 2. The SCAP also serves as a biennial report on progress on the County's climate work as required by K.C.C. 18.50.010.

Climate change is a paramount challenge with fundamental and far-reaching consequences—a threat multiplier exacerbating inequities and intensifying natural hazards such as flooding, wildfires, and extreme heat that put our people, economy, and environment at risk. The 2020 SCAP update recommends the County's next set of commitments that advance King County's leadership in equitable climate solutions, reduce climate risks, and protect the natural environment for everyone who lives here today and for those who follow us.

Current events demand meaningful and equitable progress on climate change that addresses the inequitable impacts of systemic racism and racial justice. To that end, the SCAP update adds a new section, Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities, as a community-driven framework addressing climate equity. The framework was developed by leaders of the Climate Equity Community Task Force who represent Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities disproportionately impacted by climate change as well as by historic and current inequities. This section was developed through a collaborative process where frontline community leaders identified actions and priority areas based on climate justice principles and community needs. King County is working to ensure that frontline communities have the knowledge, skills, resources, capacity, and the social and political capital to contribute to climate solutions, prepare for the impacts of climate change, and to equitably recover, adapt, and thrive in a changing climate.

I am excited about the path the 2020 SCAP outlines to sharply reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for both County operations and at the countywide scale. It builds on technical analysis, extensive public input, and partnership with diverse stakeholders to recommend specific actions to reach shared overarching goals.

King County is regionally and nationally recognized as a leader in innovation and investment in reducing GHG emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change. Opportunities to reduce energy use and GHG emissions are embedded through the work plans and capital investment plans of County departments and lines of business. In addition to reducing emissions, these investments provide cleaner and safer work environments for our workforce, and save money, demonstrating good fiscal management of county funds. For example, investments in energy efficiency and changes in operations have reduced normalized building energy use by more than 20 percent since 2007, saving taxpayers more than \$4 million per year. King County Metro leads the nation in action to transition to a zero emissions fleet powered by clean, renewable energy. In addition, the County partnered with cities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and volunteers to plant over one million trees, building the foundation for initiatives to increase forest health and access. The County also launched the Land Conservation and Local Food Initiatives, preserving the unique beauty and agricultural fabric of our community, and partnered with tribes, local and regional governments and NGOs to establish the Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative in 2017.

However, to build on the momentum that is bending the curve of GHG emissions, elevate the voices of frontline communities, promote a clean energy economy, and ensure that our built infrastructure and natural environment are resilient in the face of a changing climate, the County needs even bolder action and stronger collaboration with cities, businesses, and county residents. The 2020 SCAP update includes the following bold steps:

- Commits to a three-part strategy to reduce car trips through sustained and increased transit options; focusing almost all new development in urban areas; and developing equitable vehicle usage pricing strategies, while also reducing emissions from County owned vehicles by 45 percent by 2025.
- Targets reducing countywide energy use by 25 percent and fossil fuel use by 20 percent by 2030. For County operations, the update extends strong efficiency targets, eliminates fossil fuel use in new facilities, and recommits the County to use 100 percent carbon free electricity.
- Advances green building codes and a more sustainable commercial energy code countywide towards net zero GHG in new buildings by 2031; implements the highest green building and sustainable development and equity and social justice standards in King County capital projects.
- Advances a countywide circular economy framework with zero waste of resources and zero edible food waste by 2030; commits to increased purchasing of sustainable and recycled products,
- Highlights the new 30-Year Forest Plan; advances the Land Conservation Initiative, including a new commitment to invest \$25 million by 2025 to improve access to urban

greenspace and support immigrant and refugee farmers; expands work to plant, protect and prepare 3 million trees by 2025.

- Prepares our region for climate impacts, reducing damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure while protecting human health, improving water quality, and supporting salmon recovery.
- Elevates the voices of frontline communities to shape climate policy and actions that address root causes of climate inequity.

Including diverse voices was a focus for the 2020 SCAP update. County staff pursued equity-driven engagement strategies, receiving input and direction from partners, community leaders, county staff, frontline communities, and the public. Participants in workshops included environmental organizations, building industry representatives, labor, and businesses.

The 2020 SCAP advances King County Strategic Plan goals for public safety, economic growth, and environmental sustainability by reducing GHG emissions and preparing for climate change impacts. Consistent with Equity and Social Justice Goals, the 2020 SCAP is developed with an environmental justice framework in partnership with those communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. The 2020 SCAP also charts specific actions that the County, in coordination with partners, can use to create opportunities to address historical and current inequities that place some communities at disproportionate risk.

Climate action has been, and will continue to be, a County priority. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic and county budget impacts will affect how quickly actions and targets can be implemented. In the near term, agencies are working to make climate action part of core work and budgets and are reviewing how existing resources can be used to implement the SCAP. In the long term, the County's ability to deliver on 2020 SCAP commitments is dependent on the structural funding mechanisms for transit, energy, public health, and critical infrastructure. I look forward to our continued partnership to address broader, long-term funding and policy issues that are essential to achieving long-term climate goals for King County.

The 2020 SCAP, which also serves as a biennial report, is estimated to have cost approximately \$150,000 to develop and produce.

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Thank you for your consideration of this SCAP update and proposed motion, and continued partnership on climate action. This moment requires more than setting ambitious goals. It requires the courage to transform entire systems to reduce the harmful effects of climate change and build a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable King County – and that is what we will achieve, together.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Rachel Brombaugh, Acting Director of Climate and Energy Initiatives, at 206-263-9633.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers
ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive
Gina Topp, Chief Policy Advisor, Office of the Executive
Dwight Dively, Director, Performance, Strategy and Budget
Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Rachel Brombaugh, Acting Director, Climate and Energy Initiatives, Office of the Executive