



Legislation Text

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A MOTION relating to county efforts to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the effects of climate change on the environment, human health and the economy and to minimize King County's operational environmental footprint, and rescinding Motion 12362.

WHEREAS, there is consensus among the world's leading scientists, including the National Academies and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, that human sources of climate pollution such as carbon dioxide and methane are causing unprecedented and severe changes in global and local climate systems, and the related impacts are among the most significant environmental challenges facing the world, and

WHEREAS, climate scientists at the University of Washington report that significant changes to the Pacific Northwest climate are causing environmental changes including decreasing mountain snowpack and increasing flooding, and are negatively impacting infrastructure, forests, salmon, human health and the Puget Sound, and

WHEREAS, King County's diversity of natural habitats and species, known as biodiversity, helps to support pollination of crops, flood and erosion control, fisheries and recreation, and

WHEREAS, climate change is causing increased stress and changes in distribution of plant and animal species due to vegetation range shifts, streamflow changes, invasive species invasions and increased freshwater and marine water temperatures, and

WHEREAS, left unaddressed, human induced changes to the climate system will severely impact economic prosperity and quality of life in King County and elsewhere, and

WHEREAS, buildings account for thirty-five percent of greenhouse gas emissions that occur in King County, and

WHEREAS, transportation accounts for forty-eight percent of greenhouse gas emissions that occur in King County, and

WHEREAS, King County citizens, businesses, and governments also share responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions associated with goods and services that are produced outside the region and consumed and disposed of locally, and

WHEREAS, projects that reduce climate pollution, such as energy efficiency waste management improvements, can have multiple benefits to the county and its citizens, including reducing operating costs and creating new revenue sources for King County government, improving public health, and building a green economy, and

WHEREAS, the integration of land use, waste management and transportation planning to create vibrant urban communities where residents can conveniently walk, bicycle, van pool, ride share or take transit to places of work, school and shopping can save energy, reduce climate pollution and waste, and improve health, and

WHEREAS, protecting and restoring natural areas such as wetlands and forests naturally sequesters carbon dioxide and also supports a healthy and robust ecosystem that is more resilient to local climate change impacts, and

WHEREAS, actions to reduce climate pollution support many other county priorities from protecting the Puget Sound to addressing health inequities among King County residents, to building a green economy, and

WHEREAS, the King County 2010-2014 Strategic Plan established environmental sustainability as one of King County's eight goals, and outlines objectives to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the effects of climate change on the environment, human health and the economy and to minimize King County's operational

environmental footprint, and

WHEREAS, the 2010 King County Energy Plan established near-term goals for energy efficiency in county buildings and vehicles, promotes the use and production of renewable and greenhouse gas-neutral energy, and calls for integrated monitoring and reporting of climate, energy and green building outcomes, and

WHEREAS, RCW 70.235.020 requires that by 2020 Washington state reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels, and that by 2050 emissions are further reduced to fifty percent below 1990 levels, and

WHEREAS, the King County Comprehensive Plan directed that the county collaborate with other local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region to eighty percent below 2007 levels by 2050 and incorporate climate change considerations into county plans, programs and projects among other related policies and goals, and

WHEREAS, the draft King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan commits to implementing solid waste management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including mitigation through conservation and energy recovery, and adaptation through modifying facilities and operations, and

WHEREAS, K.C.C. chapter 18.17 requires the incorporation of green and sustainable practices into the design, construction and operation of capital improvement projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy and other operating costs and create healthier and more appealing environments for the public, and

WHEREAS, the 2011 King County Board of Health Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines call for residents in all communities in King County to have access to safe and convenient opportunities for physical activity and exercise that will result in a co-benefit of reducing vehicle miles traveled and reducing climate pollution, and

WHEREAS, people located within one mile of public amenities such as regional trails are more likely to access those trails for mobility and recreation, which will result in a co-benefit of reducing vehicle miles traveled and reducing climate pollution, and

WHEREAS, climate policies were integrated throughout the King County Comprehensive Plan during

the last major update in 2008, and the next major Comprehensive Plan update in 2012 provides an opportunity to revise climate goals and policies to reflect new direction from Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 and the updated King County Countywide Planning Policies, and

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Planning Council approved in 2011 a new countywide planning policy calling for the establishment of a countywide greenhouse gas reduction target that exceeds the statewide reduction requirement that is stated as the 2050 goal of a fifty-percent reduction below 1990 levels, while also establishing several other climate change and energy related policies, and

WHEREAS, King County partnered with the city of Seattle and the Puget Sound Clean Air agency to update the King County geographic greenhouse gas emissions inventory, assess emissions associated with all King County consumption regardless of where the emissions occur, and to develop a framework for assessing progress towards countywide emissions reduction goals, and

WHEREAS, emissions from King County operations represent only a small percentage of all King County greenhouse gas emissions, and significant progress in meeting emissions reduction targets can only happen through collaborative action at a countywide scale, and

WHEREAS, King County is carrying out a wide range of transportation, land use, open space and resource land protection, land management, energy efficiency, green building, waste reduction, recycling and outreach initiatives to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the inevitable impacts of climate change, and

WHEREAS, long-term and significant reductions in climate pollution will only be achieved through commitments to specific targets and actions and to reduce climate pollution and by assessing the results of these actions, and

WHEREAS, Motion 12362, the climate and energy motion adopted in 2006, outlined a series of near-term actions and opportunities related to climate change, and

WHEREAS, over the course of the last five years there have been significant changes in the area of climate change that warrant an update to Motion 12362, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 17270 (Proposed Ordinance 2012-0049) requires development of a strategic climate action plan using the planning framework of the King County Strategic Plan to be completed by June 29, 2012, and

WHEREAS, reducing climate pollution and preparing for climate change are key objectives of the 2010 King County Strategic Plan and there are opportunities for immediate actions to advance these objectives during 2012 while a more detailed strategic climate action plan is being developed, and

WHEREAS, this motion shall serve to guide the county's immediate actions to reduce climate emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change while a more detailed strategic climate action plan is developed in 2012, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. Motion 12362 is hereby rescinded.

B. With respect to conducting emissions inventories, establishing greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and performance measures, and ensuring accountability:

1. The county will continue its collaboration in 2012 with the city of Seattle and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and other partners to develop key messages and communications strategies related to a recently completed comprehensive assessment of greenhouse gas emissions associated with King County and will use this new data to guide projects, programs and policies that best support community-scale emissions reductions;

2. The county, through its participation in the Growth Management Planning Council, will collaborate with cities to develop a countywide-level emissions reduction target that is informed by the recent emissions inventory work and meets or exceeds the current state requirements for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This includes establishing a 2020 goal for reduction of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from King County operations informed by recent countywide greenhouse gas emissions inventories conducted in partnership with the city of Seattle and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency as well as through conducting

lifecycle assessments of carbon emissions from King County facilities and operations;

3. As part of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan update and the development of a strategic climate action plan, the county will review and revise its climate and energy goals as needed to ensure that it is doing its part both operationally and at the community scale to advance the emissions reduction targets being established by the growth management planning council;

4. The county will monitor and report greenhouse gas emissions from government operations using protocols approved by the Climate Registry beginning in 2012;

5. King County should continue to participate as a test community in the development of national standards for measuring sustainability at a community scale, through the "STAR Communities" program sponsored by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, and use lessons learned from this effort to inform both future actions and performance measures; and

6. As required by Ordinance 17270 (Proposed Ordinance 2012-0049), the county will develop and report on specific strategies and performance measures and targets to reduce climate pollution and prepare for the impacts of climate change, and use performance findings on an ongoing basis to update targets and strategies. This reporting will take place as part of integrated annual reporting on climate, energy, green building, and environmental purchasing required by KCC 18.50.010.

C. With respect to managing land use and transportation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

1. As part of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update, King County will review and update policies related to land use and transportation based on changes in federal and state requirements, current climate science, the outcome of updated community and operational emissions inventories, multicounty planning policies and updated countywide planning policies;

2. Consistent with the 2011 King County Board of Health Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines and as part of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update, King County will review and update policies and regulations to encourage a mix of land uses with well-designed public spaces accessible to transportation

alternatives including public transit and pedestrian and bicycle facilities, which simultaneously reduce climate pollution and help to prevent chronic disease and premature death;

3. The county will work with developers, community groups and the Sustainable Cities Roundtable to identify and establish additional incentives to locate new development within established urban centers, use design standards that will reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions beyond what is required by current building and energy codes, and maximize carbon sequestration functions of soils and vegetation through site layout and restoration. As part of this effort, the county will evaluate use of the state environmental policy act review as a tool for evaluating alternatives for relative greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating impacts;

4. The county will work with cities, the Puget Sound Regional Council, regional transit agencies, and housing groups as part of implementing the Sustainable Communities Grant to develop policies and strategies to encourage and guide transit oriented development along high capacity corridors. As part of this effort, the county will carry out a "catalyst" project around the Northgate Transit Hub, promoting integrated planning and support for housing, mixed use development, and seamless connections between bus and light rail transportation modes. The county will also promote transit oriented development at park and ride lots around the county, including South Kirkland Park and Ride. In participating in joint planning efforts for transit oriented development, the county should encourage use of green building standards;

5. Consistent with the Regional Transit Task Force recommendations and the Metro Transit Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, the county will plan transit service by more closely linking employment centers and residential density to service, while also ensuring social equity and considering geographic value concerns;

6. As funding allows, the county will expand the transit division's participation in the Washington state Commute Trip Reduction employer partnerships program to achieve a ten percent reduction in drive alone commuting by 2015;

7. Building on the successful establishment of the RapidRide Line between Federal Way and Tukwila in 2010, and between Bellevue and Redmond in 2011, the county will continue to implement the RapidRide

program with the following target dates for new lines: downtown Seattle to West Seattle and Ballard in 2012; downtown Seattle to the King-Snohomish line in 2013; and Renton to Burien in 2013;

8. Consistent with the 2010 King County Energy Plan, the county will replace diesel buses if sufficient funding and appropriate technologies are available to help to achieve the county's energy and climate goals;

9. The county will continue to lead efforts to promote electric vehicles and participate in infrastructure improvements to support widespread adoption of this technology; and

10. King County will continue to develop and maintain an interconnected countywide system of regional trails in order to promote options for nonmotorized transportation, especially in historically underserved geographies and communities with poor health outcomes relative to the county population as a whole.

D. With respect to managing land and providing technical assistance and incentives to enhance carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

1. King County will continue to promote the use of conservation easements on private property as well as acquire, steward and restore natural public lands for ecological and recreational purposes. These protected lands will provide biological carbon storage in forests and soils and will help reduce local climate change impacts such as increasing flooding;

2. The county will continue to support forestry and agriculture technical assistance, tax incentives and property acquisitions as a way to offset greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration;

3. The county will partner with the National Wildlife Federation and others to publicize a new on-line technical assistance program in 2012 to encourage private land owners to retain and enhance forest and soil cover and productivity to improve carbon sequestration and reduce climate change impacts;

4. The county will consider establishment of tax incentives through the public benefit rating program tied to commitments by landowners to enhance carbon sequestration through retention and enhancement of

forest and soil cover productivity; and

5. King County will pursue opportunities to support forest and soil management and restoration projects, and conduct these projects in ways that prioritize biological carbon sequestration and plan for changing climate conditions.

E. With respect to environmental management, emergency preparedness, and preparing for impacts of climate change:

1. As part of the next update to the flood hazard management plan, began in 2011, the county will review available information on the potential impacts of climate change on winter floods, and consider these impacts in updating flood risk reduction policies and capital improvements plans and projects;

2. By the end of 2012, the county should inventory essential county facilities, including roads and wastewater treatment and conveyance facilities, that are subject to climate change related impacts including sea level rise and exacerbated river flooding, and develop strategies for reducing risks and mitigating future damages;

3. King County will integrate observed and projected climate change related changes in severe weather, flooding, drought, fire, landslides, and related issues into emergency management planning and programs including the 2014 King County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan;

4. The county, consistent with the Regional Wastewater Services Plan and Reclaimed Water Plan, should evaluate alternatives for production and use of reclaimed water for industrial, irrigation and environmental restoration purposes to determine if it is a reasonable means of mitigating the climate change impacts projected to decrease summer stream flows and affect water supplies; and

5. To foster resistance and resilience to climate change in ecosystems and species, the county will prioritize the restoration of riparian vegetation to reduce warming in cold water systems, restore wetlands to reduce drought and flooding, improve connections between different habitats and protect and restore areas most likely to be resistant to climate change.

F. With respect to improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from county operations:

1. The county will implement the adopted 2010 King County Energy Plan, including actions to achieve the following near-term goals: produce, use, or purchase renewable energy equal to fifty percent of total county energy requirements by 2012, reduce net normalized energy usage in county buildings by ten percent by 2012 and reduce net normalized energy use in county vehicles by ten percent by 2015;

2. The county will develop medium and long-term energy goals in 2012 needed to support achievement of the community-level greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and county operational emissions targets established through the strategic climate action plan, the countywide planning policy update and King County Comprehensive Plan update, and the King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan update;

3. The county will continue to maximize the creation of resources from products such as biogas, biosolids and heat produced by wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal in a manner that produces renewable energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions;

4. The county will seek, subject to budget, operational, and maintenance limitations, to utilize the most energy-efficient commercially viable vehicles for its fleet. King County will also seek to deploy these vehicles in an energy-efficient manner through vehicle routing, idling reduction, and operator practices;

5. Consistent with 2010 King County Energy Plan, the county will evaluate options and develop policy guidance and budgeting practices in 2012 to enable county agencies to capture verified operating savings from purchase of hybrid vehicles and building efficiency projects, and apply the savings to up-front capital investment in vehicle purchase or efficiency improvements;

6. The county will transition to use of one-hundred percent recycled content paper in 2012 and carry out a campaign to reduce paper use by an additional 20 percent by 2013;

7. The county will continue to provide internal training and technical assistance to ensure consistent

implementation of the green building and sustainable development ordinance, Ordinance 16147;

8. The executive shall identify actions the county may take to ensure that capital improvement projects consider opportunities for the county to participate in district energy projects when and where appropriate;

9. The county will continue its participation in the United States Environmental Protection Agency's WasteWise program to promote internal waste prevention, recycling collection and purchase of recycled products. The county will continue to quantify and report the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions associated with these actions; and

10. The county will review international best practices in emissions reductions for energy efficiency, renewable energy generation and waste management, including studies and standards adopted by the European Union, in the continual process of updating this strategic climate action plan based on new research.

G. With respect to community outreach, education, advocacy and information sharing with other local governments and universities:

1. As funding allows, the county will continue to participate in national and regional organizations of local governments sharing strategies to reduce emissions and prepare for climate change. The county will continue to advocate for federal initiatives and grant programs, like the Better Buildings Initiative and Energy Efficiency Community Development Block Grants, which support local investments in projects to reduce energy use and efficiency while creating green jobs;

2. The county will continue to advocate for national emissions inventory standards that recognize the unique role of local governments, particularly counties, and managing land use and transportation in a manner that reduces community-scale emissions;

3. The county will continue to carry out green building programs, which provide technical assistance to local governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, and residents to implement green building practices while addressing critical environmental issues, such as climate change, critical habitat restoration and solid waste reduction;

4. As described in Ordinance 17270 (Proposed Ordinance 2012-0061), the county will participate in and support the King County-Cities Climate Pledge and Collaboration, a partnership between the cities of King County and King County itself to increase the effectiveness of local governments' sustainability and climate change efforts;

5. The county will continue to pursue waste reduction and recycling initiatives, including education and technical assistance to cities, to divert waste from disposal and reducing associated greenhouse gas emissions;

6. Consistent with the Regional Economic Strategy for Central Puget Sound, King County will work with the business community to help identify effective and efficient green manufacturing practices that reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and promote King County and the Puget Sound region as a center for green manufacturing. The county will also work with community groups to promote the consumption of green-manufactured products;

7. The county will continue to partner with the University of Washington to identify and plan for the impact of climate change on human health, including synthesizing data on the effects of changing temperature on illness and death in King County; and

8. The county will develop and incorporate into existing outreach efforts public health messages related to the health implications of climate change, particularly in urban communities, and the benefits of actions, such as using alternative transportation options that simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health.

H. Using the King County Strategic Plan framework, the executive shall review and integrate, as appropriate, the near-term actions specified in sections B through G in this motion with the strategic climate action plan being developed consistent with Ordinance 17270. (Proposed Ordinance 2012-0049).