



Legislation Text

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AN ORDINANCE creating the King County Metro transit carbon offset program; requiring the wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division to be carbon neutral by 2025, by investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy, the production of renewable energy, carbon offsets and other practices to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases from operations; and adding a new chapter to K.C.C. Title 28.

STATEMENT OF FACTS:

1. King County places a high priority on reducing the environmental footprint of King County operations.
2. King County has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in its operations.
3. Transportation accounts for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions produced in King County.
4. In 2012, King County adopted the Strategic Climate Action Plan required by Ordinance 17270, which states the county has an overarching climate goal is to partner with its residents, businesses, local governments and other partners to reduce countywide greenhouse gas emissions by at least eighty percent below 2007 levels by 2050.
5. In 2014, the Growth Management Planning Council, which includes elected leaders from King County and its cities, unanimously adopted a new countywide planning policy to reduce countywide sources of greenhouse gas emissions by twenty-five percent by 2020, fifty percent by 2030 and eighty percent by 2050, compared to a 2007 baseline.
6. King County also has an overarching climate change goal to reduce total greenhouse gas

emissions from government operations, compared to a 2007 baseline, by at least fifteen percent by 2015, twenty-five percent by 2020 and fifty percent by 2030.

7. The transit division has a significant and beneficial impact on the region's greenhouse gas emissions and displaces roughly four times more greenhouse gas emission than it generates, which is a net displacement of approximately six hundred thousand metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent each year.

8. The operations of the wastewater treatment division and solid waste division protect our environment by disposing of solid waste and wastewater in an environmentally sound way. However, certain components of these operations are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions, including: emissions associated with energy used in buildings and facilities and to collect and treat wastewater and solid waste; emissions from the diesel and gasoline used in vehicles; emissions from the methane and other greenhouse gas emissions associated with wastewater treatment and county-owned landfills; and indirect emissions related to services, supplies and equipment, especially from construction contracts.

9. In 2013, the department of natural resources parks and its divisions, including the wastewater treatment division and solid waste division, committed to achieving carbon neutral operations and are actively pursuing activities to reduce their operational greenhouse gas footprint. The department has made significant progress to date by engaging employees, accelerating energy efficiency, renewable energy and tree-planting projects, as well as improving methods for calculating greenhouse gas emissions and offsets.

10. Ordinance 15556, enacted in 2006, approved King County's membership in the Chicago Climate Exchange to reduce King County's carbon emissions and, among other purposes, to develop an accounting methodology for emission trading that recognizes the transit division's role in reducing regional greenhouse gas emissions and credits regional entities for providing

public transit service and to establish such a regional transit credit.

11. Both the wastewater treatment division and solid waste division are utilities under Title 36 RCW.

12. RCW 36.01.250 gives any county authorized to acquire and operate utilities or conduct other proprietary or user or ratepayer funded activities explicit statutory authority to reduce or mitigate the greenhouse emissions of such utilities, including investing in carbon offsets or other credits.

13. In enacting RCW 36.01.250, the state made the following findings in Chapter 349, Laws of Washington 2007: "The legislature also finds and declares that greenhouse gases offset contracts, credits, and other greenhouse gases mitigation efforts are a recognized purpose of other county proprietary activities that are funded by users and ratepayers, and that such mitigation efforts confer a direct benefit on such payers."

14. The purchase of carbon offsets from the transit division by the wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division is an important tool in a portfolio of actions to meet the goals of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of King County operations and in the county.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Sections 2 through 4 of this ordinance should constitute a new chapter in K.C.C. Title 28.

NEW SECTION. SECTION 2. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

A. "Additionality" means the principle of achieving net greenhouse gas emissions savings over and above those that would have arisen anyway in the absence of a given activity or project.

B. "Carbon neutral" means no net greenhouse gas emissions from operations, including when carbon offsets are applied to the emissions calculation

C. "Carbon offset" means a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to mitigate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere.

D. "Transit carbon offset" means an investment by the transit division that results in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions beyond standard operations, thereby achieving additionality.

NEW SECTION. SECTION 3. The wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division shall aggressively reduce both direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions from operations.

The department of natural resources and parks shall achieve overall carbon-neutral operations by 2017. The wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division shall each achieve carbon-neutral operations by 2025. For purposes of calculating carbon neutrality, purchased offsets may only be included in the calculation only if those carbon offsets meet the principle of additionality. The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions shall be accomplished through energy efficiency, investments in the use of renewable energy, the production of renewable energy, carbon offsets consistent with RCW 36.01.250 and other division projects that reduce or sequester greenhouse gas emissions to reduce the emissions of greenhouse emissions from operations.

The wastewater treatment and solid waste divisions shall annually calculate their greenhouse gas emissions and create an annual greenhouse gas inventory using recognized methodologies and protocols, to the extent available. The first annual greenhouse gas inventory shall be reviewed by an independent third party with proven experience in emission inventory calculations. Subsequent annual greenhouse gas inventories shall be reviewed, by an independent third party with proven experience in emission inventory calculations, periodically and when there is a material change in the wastewater treatment division's or solid waste division's operations or energy use or source.

NEW SECTION. SECTION 4. A. The King County Metro transit carbon offset program is hereby created and shall be administered by the transit division.

B. Transit carbon offsets shall be reviewed by an an independent third-party organization with proven experience in emission mitigation activities to ensure that transit carbon offsets meet the requirements of RCW

36.01.250.

C. The transit division shall also make carbon offsets available for purchase by individuals or public or private entities.

D. The transit division shall make carbon offsets available for purchase to the wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division as a means for those divisions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division shall evaluate the purchase of transit division carbon offsets, as necessary, to achieve the requirements of this chapter.

E. When purchasing carbon offsets, the wastewater treatment division and the solid waste division shall ensure the offsets meet the requirements of RCW 36.01.250. In purchasing offsets, the wastewater treatment division and the solid waste divisions shall purchase offsets from to the transit division before purchasing carbon offsets from outside of the county if transit division offsets are comparably priced.

F. Revenue from the sale of carbon offsets shall be used by the transit division solely for the purposes of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through providing additional transit service hours or investments that reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from transit operations beyond standard operations, thereby achieving additionality.

G. The executive shall ensure that transit carbon offsets are not double counted in calculating the greenhouse gas emissions for King County. ..

SECTION 5. Before implementing the King County Metro Transit carbon offset program, the executive shall report to council by June 1, 2015, on potential options for structuring the program, potential buyers of the offsets, and the costs and revenues of implementing the program. The executive must file the report in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the policy staff director and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its successor.