

Working Without Going to Work ... Is It Workable? It's Being Tracked

By Josh Farley
Saturday, February 7, 2009

Employees of 16 businesses and institutions are teleworking as part of an effort to gather data on the practice.

BREMERTON

Art Castle can move seamlessly between office and home for work, he says, "as long as I've got a computer, telephone and a fax machine."

The director of the Home Builder's Association of Kitsap County is bringing some of his fellow staff members into the world of telecommuting as part of an effort aided by a state-funded program.

The Telework Pilot Project, launched with \$150,000 from the Legislature, is an attempt to collect data on teleworking in the county. It began asking workers to track their commuting habits Feb. 1.

Telecommuting cuts down traffic congestion and thus road maintenance costs and carbon emissions, according to the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council, which is administering the project.

But Castle sees a potentially huge benefit to his employees, by giving them greater flexibility in their work days and a chance to get out of the hustle and bustle of the office and concentrate on a specific project.

"It could make it better for the employee and the employer," he said.

He's allowing three of the five full-time employees in his office a chance of teleworking up to one day every other week.

Teleworking employees from 16 organizations, including both public entities and private businesses, will make once-a-week entries in a kind of commuter diary to build up data on just how these people do what they do, said Brad Rucker, the project's manager.

For instance, how much do those who telework drive? Do they still have to run the kids to day care? And when they do commute, what time of day do they do so? Do they ride alone or take mass transit?

They're also addressing their attitudes, Rucker said. For example, do they get lonely spending the day at home working?

Ed Stern, a member of the Poulsbo City Council and the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council who is the project's policy manager, has been commuting himself to Olympia to tell lawmakers about the project.

He told the House Transportation Committee on Thursday that the 16 organizations undertaking the project will finish their commuting diaries at the end of May, and a report will be in lawmakers' hands on how it went in July.

Castle said he will examine the data the project provides to temper his telecommuting approach. For

instance, "do we do it on an organized basis, or a more ad hoc basis?"

Regardless, he sees a future in teleworking. If nothing else, fewer miles driven means more money in your pocket, he noted.

"Maybe it's not a lot of gas, but it's something," he said.

On the Web

www.teleworktoolkit.com



© 2007 Kitsap Sun