



**KING COUNTY**

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

**Signature Report**

**February 3, 2015**

**Ordinance 17971**

**Proposed No. 2014-0479.2**

**Sponsors Dembowski and Phillips**

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

9 STATEMENT OF FACTS:

- 10 1. King County places a high priority on reducing the environmental  
11 footprint of King County operations.
- 12 2. King County has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in its  
13 operations.
- 14 3. Transportation accounts for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions  
15 produced in King County.
- 16 4. In 2012, King County adopted the Strategic Climate Action Plan  
17 required by Ordinance 17270, which states the county has an overarching  
18 climate goal is to partner with its residents, businesses, local governments

19 and other partners to reduce countywide greenhouse gas emissions by at  
20 least eighty percent below 2007 levels by 2050.

21 5. In 2014, the Growth Management Planning Council, which includes  
22 elected leaders from King County and its cities, unanimously adopted a  
23 new countywide planning policy to reduce countywide sources of  
24 greenhouse gas emissions by twenty-five percent by 2020, fifty percent by  
25 2030 and eighty percent by 2050, compared to a 2007 baseline.

26 6. King County also has an overarching climate change goal to reduce  
27 total greenhouse gas emissions from government operations, compared to  
28 a 2007 baseline, by at least fifteen percent by 2015, twenty-five percent by  
29 2020 and fifty percent by 2030.

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

35 8. The operations of the wastewater treatment division and solid waste  
36 division protect our environment by disposing of solid waste and  
37 wastewater in an environmentally sound way. However, certain  
38 components of these operations are significant sources of greenhouse gas  
39 emissions, including: emissions associated with energy used in buildings  
40 and facilities and to collect and treat wastewater and solid waste;  
41 emissions from the diesel and gasoline used in vehicles; emissions from

42 the methane and other greenhouse gas emissions associated with  
43 wastewater treatment and county-owned landfills; and indirect emissions  
44 related to services, supplies and equipment, especially from construction  
45 contracts.

46 9. In 2013, the department of natural resources parks and its divisions,  
47 including the wastewater treatment division and solid waste division,  
48 committed to achieving carbon neutral operations and are actively  
49 pursuing activities to reduce their operational greenhouse gas footprint.

50 The department has made significant progress to date by engaging  
51 employees, accelerating energy efficiency, renewable energy and tree-  
52 planting projects, as well as improving methods for calculating greenhouse  
53 gas emissions and offsets.

54 10. Ordinance 15556, enacted in 2006, approved King County's  
55 membership in the Chicago Climate Exchange to reduce King County's  
56 carbon emissions and, among other purposes, to develop an accounting  
57 methodology for emission trading that recognizes the transit division's role  
58 in reducing regional greenhouse gas emissions and credits regional entities  
59 for providing public transit service and to establish such a regional transit  
60 credit.

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

63 12. RCW 36.01.250 gives any county authorized to acquire and operate  
64 utilities or conduct other proprietary or user or ratepayer funded activities

65 explicit statutory authority to reduce or mitigate the greenhouse emissions  
66 of such utilities, including investing in carbon offsets or other credits.

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

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

78 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

106 The wastewater treatment and solid waste divisions shall annually calculate their  
107 greenhouse gas emissions and create an annual greenhouse gas inventory using  
108 recognized methodologies and protocols, to the extent available. The first annual  
109 greenhouse gas inventory shall be reviewed by an independent third party with proven  
110 experience in emission inventory calculations. Subsequent annual greenhouse gas

111 inventories shall be reviewed, by an independent third party with proven experience in  
112 emission inventory calculations, periodically and when there is a material change in the  
113 wastewater treatment division's or solid waste division's operations or energy use or  
114 source.

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

117 B. Transit carbon offsets shall be reviewed by an an independent third-party  
118 organization with proven experience in emission mitigation activities to ensure that  
119 transitcarbon offsets meet the requirements of RCW 36.01.250.

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

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

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

132 F. Revenue from the sale of carbon offsets shall be used by the transit division  
133 solely for the purposes of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through providing

134 additional transit service hours or investments that reduce the greenhouse gas emissions  
135 from transit operations beyond standard operations, thereby achieving additionality.

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

138 SECTION 5. Before implementing the King County Metro Transit carbon offset  
139 program, the executive shall report to council by June 1, 2015, on potential options for  
140 structuring the program, potential buyers of the offsets, and the costs and revenues of  
141 implementing the program. The executive must file the report in the form of a paper  
142 original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original  
143 and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the

144 policy staff director and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment  
145 committee, or its successor.  
146

Ordinance 17971 was introduced on 12/1/2014 and passed as amended by the Metropolitan King County Council on 2/2/2015, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Mr. Phillips, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Lambert,  
Mr. Dunn, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Dembowski and Mr. Upthegrove  
No: 0  
Excused: 1 - Ms. Hague

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

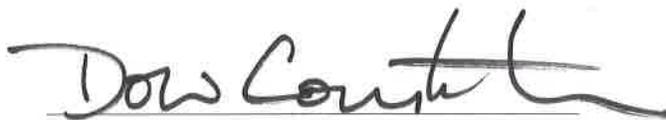
  
Larry Phillips, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 4 day of FEBRUARY, 2015.



Dow Constantine, County Executive

Attachments: None