



February 6, 2024

COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM 5 B

TELECOMMUTE STUDY

TYPE OF ITEM: Presentation/Discussion/Action

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The Telecommute Study was initiated in July of 2023. This study evaluated the impacts of Covid 19 stay-at-home orders on congestion in the CRTPA Region, assessed telecommuting trends, challenges, and opportunities, and evaluated the potential impacts to the transportation network based upon three different scenarios. The Project Manager will present an overview of the Study, including technical and policy findings, and answer any questions from the CRTPA Committees.

HISTORY AND ANALYSIS

The Telecommute Study explores how teleworking can impact transportation demand and reduce peak-hour traffic congestion in the four-county region. The interest in telecommuting came about unexpectedly when, in 2020, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic created a significant increase in telecommuting. Pandemic stay-at-home orders dramatically reduced travel and congestion in the region, even in peak hours.

In the subsequent years, as communities have regained a sense of normalcy, area traffic has also rebounded to pre-COVID levels. Although working from home is no longer a public health necessity, telecommuting is now a more acceptable and implemented practice. Scenario planning demonstrates that implementing telecommuting programs can affect area traffic and is an effective Transportation Demand Management strategy.

Building upon lessons learned about pandemic travel behavior, as well as input from regional employers, the study illustrates that telecommuting:

- Creates more flexible work opportunities that attract top talent to the region.
- Reduces peak-hour congestion throughout the region.
- Supports the region's economic resilience by making employers more adaptive.

In addition, the report presents:

- Relevant Transportation Demand Management and telecommuting research.
- Findings from a review of current, pre-pandemic, and pandemic commute patterns.
- Key input received through stakeholder interviews.
- Resources for employers for developing a telecommuting program.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Option 1: Recommend the Board approve the Telecommute Study Technical Report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Telecommute Study Technical Draft Report

Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency Telecommute Study

Executive Summary

The Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) Telecommute Study explores how telecommuting can impact transportation demand and reduce peak-hour traffic congestion in the four-county Capital Region. The interest in telecommuting came about unexpectedly when, in 2020, the advent of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic suddenly necessitated telework and dramatically reduced travel in the region. Pandemic stay-at-home orders made traffic in the Capital Region nearly non-existent, even at peak hours.

In the subsequent years, as communities have regained a sense of normalcy, area traffic has also rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Although working from home is no longer a public health necessity, telecommuting is now a more acceptable and implemented practice. The CRTPA is interested in using the lessons from life during the COVID-19 pandemic – namely, that implementing telecommuting programs can affect area traffic and is an effective Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy. Building upon lessons learned about pandemic travel behavior, as well as input from regional employers, the study demonstrates that telecommuting:

- Creates more flexible work opportunities that attract top talent to the region.
- Reduces peak-hour congestion throughout the region.
- Supports the region's economic resilience by making employers more adaptive.

This report provides the following:

- Relevant TDM and telecommuting research.
- Findings from a review of current, pre-pandemic, and pandemic commute patterns.
- Key input received through stakeholder interviews.
- Resources for employers in the Capital Region for developing a telecommuting program.

Key outcomes presented in the report include:

- Telecommuting is an effective TDM strategy to reduce traffic congestion.
- In the post-pandemic workplace telecommuting is a more established practice.
- Telecommuting workplace programs and policies facilitate establishing and managing a telework program.
- Guidance for employers on managing remote workers is a key component to supporting partners in implementation of telecommuting programs.
- Developing evaluation framework will allow employers to monitor progress of their telecommute programs and inform future decision making.

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Thank you to the members of the Project Working Group for your participation and contributions to the Telecommute Study. Staff from the following agencies assisted with the development of this document.

- ❖ Apalachee Regional Planning Council RideOn
 - ❖ City of Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality
 - ❖ City of Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department
 - ❖ City of Tallahassee StarMetro Transit
 - ❖ Leon County Department of Development Services
 - ❖ Florida State University Transportation and Parking Services
 - ❖ Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Office of Parking & Transportation
 - ❖ Florida Department of Transportation
-

How Do you Solve a Problem Like Peak-Hour Congestion?

Nobody likes sitting in traffic. To ensure roadway users can get to where they need to go efficiently, transportation authorities have turned to implementing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs in their jurisdictions. An effective TDM program can:



Alleviate traffic congestion.



Reduce transportation-related environmental impacts.



Stimulate economic activity and growth.

Historically, TDM program strategies have primarily focused on reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles in favor of alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit, walking, cycling, ridesharing. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, demonstrated that telecommuting is also an effective tool that advances the goals of a TDM program. Through this study the CRTPA examined how telecommuting impacted congestion during the pandemic and investigated the feasibility of telecommuting programs as an effective strategy to address congestion and reduce demand across its four-county transportation system.

What Creates Traffic in CRTPA Region?

Historically, trips to school, work, errands, or recreation generate vehicle volumes across the region.

Traveling for employment is an especially heavy contributor to peak-hour congestion. While workers can live in very rural areas of a region, jobs tend to cluster in the urban city centers. The primary job industries in the Capital Region, including government, education, and healthcare, are heavily concentrated in the City of Tallahassee and surrounding Leon County.

An analysis weighed information from the American Community Survey (ACS), travel speeds from HERE Technologies, volumes from Florida Traffic Online, and Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) data to understand the prevalence of physical commuting in the region, as well as how these commutes contribute to congested roadways.

In Leon County¹:

53 percent of employees live and work within the County.

47 percent of employees commute to or from surrounding Counties.

Meanwhile, for all three rural counties in the CRTPA's Planning Area—Jefferson, Wakulla, and Gadsden—more of their residents commute to Leon County for work than commute within their counties for employment, leading to longer travel distances and more congestion (Figure 2).²

¹ 2019 LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.

² LEHD, 2019.

Figure 1 Commuter Trips To, From, and Within Leon County

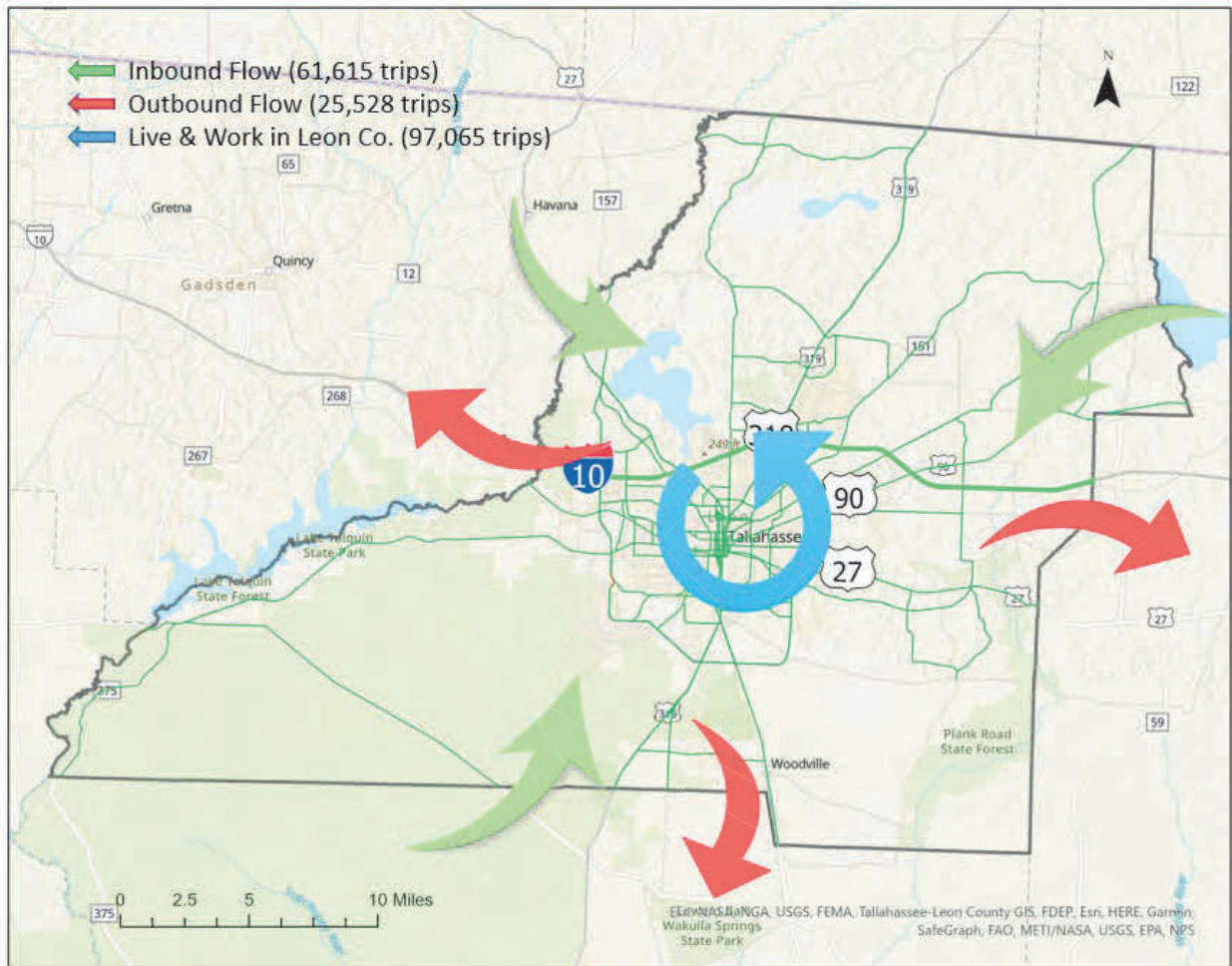
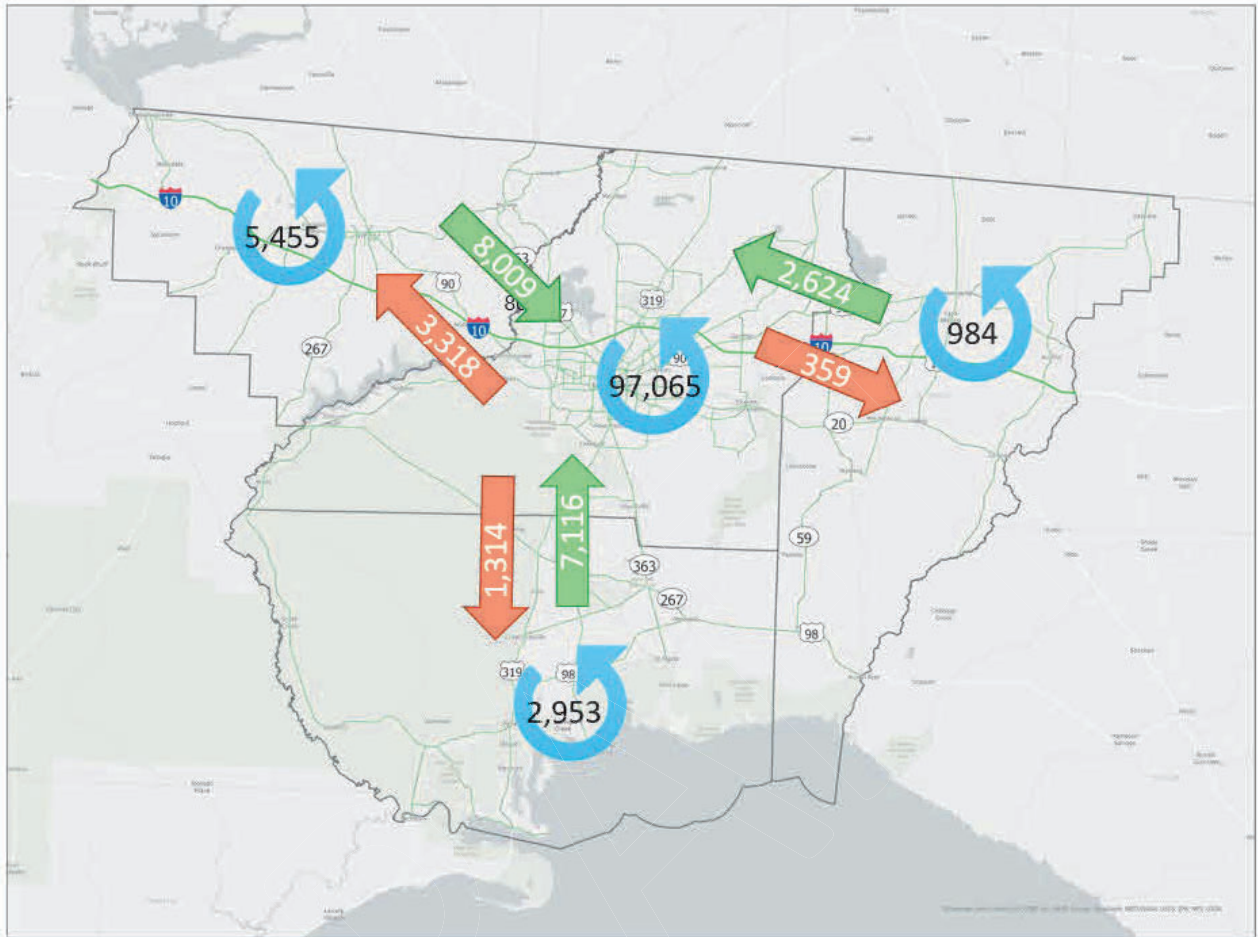


Figure 2 Commuter Flow Between All Counties in CRTPA Region



DRAFT

Literature Review: How Does Telecommuting Change a Community?

Telecommuting (also known as “remote work” or “telework”) sees employers and employees performing work tasks from a location other than a traditional office space. Teleworkers may work a mixed or hybrid schedule (working sometimes remotely and sometimes in an office), utilize a remote work hub, or primarily work from home.

Physical trips decreased in 2020 and 2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic sent nonessential workers online. The effect on congestion in the CRTPA region was most acute during the morning and evening peak hours— the prime commuting period.

Although the body of research on these questions is still developing, a review of the existing literature helps us to understand the benefits, challenges, and paradigm shifts that come with embracing telecommuting.

Telecommuting Benefits...

Our workplaces by...

- 1. Improving employee retention:** Hiring and training new employees is expensive, and turnover carries a downside to team morale, client relationships, and team capacity. Strong retention maximizes the likelihood of keeping high performers and innovators, including senior staff who may have otherwise retired early.

Nearly half (46 percent) reported that allowing telecommuting reduced attrition.³

Fourteen percent of Americans have changed jobs to shorten their commute.⁴

- 2. Improving access to jobs:** Remote work may improve access to certain jobs or industries for rural workers who would otherwise contend with long commutes.
- 3. Improving employee morale and work-life balance:** Telework increases flexibility and employees’ quality of life. One study found that removing a commute saved workers an average of 72 minutes a day; workers invested at least part of this time back into their jobs.⁵

Thirty-six percent of people in one survey reported they would choose remote work over a pay raise.⁶

- 4. Improving employee health and reducing employee absences:** Remote workers report reduced stress and illness, and more time to exercise. Flexible hours benefit employees and employers by

Key Term: A “**remote work hub**” refers to a co-working space where employees from many different companies can congregate to do work.

Remote work hubs provide employees with the infrastructure and equipment of an office without requiring them to live near the office space of their company. They also provide socialization and reduce unwanted commute times.

³ “Pros and Cons,” Global Workplace Analytics White Paper, <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

⁴ “Pros and Cons,” <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

⁵ Cevat Giray Aksoy et al., “Time Savings When Working from Home,” Becker Friedman Institute, University of Chicago, November 2023, https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/BFI_WP_2023-03.pdf.

⁶ “Pros and Cons,” <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

allowing workers to schedule appointments or run errands during the day without losing productive hours. Teleworkers return to work faster following medical absences.⁷

- 5. Reducing overhead:** Businesses that have a larger contingent of fully remote or hybrid workers report reduced real-estate costs. Employers can estimate their cost savings using the Global Workplace Analytics Telework Workplace Savings Calculator.⁸

Global Workplace Analytics reports average annual real estate savings of \$10,000 per full-time teleworking employee.⁹

- 6. Expanding the talent pool:** Remote work improves an employer’s ability to recruit caregivers, people with mobility challenges, and other talented staff for whom going into an office regularly would be a barrier.

One study reported that 37 percent of employees would change jobs for the opportunity to work remotely at least one day a week.¹⁰

Our economy by...

- 7. Improving regional resilience:** Where feasible, telework enables employers and employees to continue working should an event interrupt onsite operations, such as a natural disaster.
- 8. Increasing productivity time:** Collectively, physical commutes cost drivers in the Capital Region hundreds of thousands of productive hours.

The average commuter in Tallahassee loses 23 hours a year to work-related travel.¹¹

Our roadways by...

- 9. Reducing congestion:** Every one percent reduction in vehicles yields a three-fold decrease in congestion.¹²
- 10. Lowering stress on transportation infrastructure:** Lessening demand on transportation infrastructure will improve its lifespan.

Our environment by...

- 11. Enhancing air quality and yielding other climate benefits:** The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District determined that pandemic related shelter-in-place restrictions led to a 28 percent reduction in particulate matter pollution. In response the agency committed to promoting telework – and teleconferences for public meetings where [California’s] Brown Act requirements are still met – for its air quality and climate benefits.¹³

⁷ “Pros and Cons,” <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

⁸ The U.S. Office of Personnel Management praised the GWA Calculator in a [2016 report](#) to Congress on Federal Telework. Users must create a free account to access the “lite” version of the tool. A more comprehensive version of the tool is available for a fee.

⁹ “Pros and Cons,” <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

¹⁰ Barrero et al., “[The Evolution of Work From Home](#),” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol 37, No. 4 (2023), 23-50, <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/telecommuting-statistics>.

¹¹ City Ranking List, INRIX 2022 Global Traffic Scorecard, INRIX Institute, <https://inrix.com/scorecard/#city-ranking-list>.

¹² “Pros and Cons,” <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/pros-cons>.

¹³ <https://www.airquality.org/Communications/Documents/AQ-Benefits-Teleworking-Packet-02-28-23.pdf>

Telecommuting Strains...

Our workplaces by...

1. **Limiting opportunities for socialization:** Work from home can be isolating, particularly for people who thrive on interpersonal interaction. Employee loneliness could result in reduced productivity, health, and retention.
2. **Dispersing data security and IT needs:** Telework naturally invites more technological vulnerabilities into company networks, as staff need to remotely access servers. Software learning curves (for programs like Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams) may result in increased demand on IT resources.
3. **Limiting employer oversight:** Some managers report that oversight is more challenging when employees are remote.
4. **Siloing collaborators and team members:** Work from home may hamper spontaneous or effective collaboration.
5. **Increasing distractions during the workday:** Lack of an appropriate and comfortable telework office space may expose the teleworker to outside demands (such as children or chores), reducing productivity.

Telecommuting Changes...

1. **What “productivity” means:** Perception of worker productivity changes depending on the survey referenced and likely by job type, industry, and the personality and homelife of the employee.¹⁴ A study by the Miami Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) identified lower productivity as a top reported challenge in 2020¹⁵. Whereas employees in a San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) study reported positive impacts to productivity in both 2021 and 2023. It is notable that the 2020 survey was at the height of COVID-19 pandemic with many variables likely impacting productivity (such as school closures and fresh acclimation to work from home).

How do commutes play into “productivity”? Research in the Journal of Economic Perspectives suggests that commutes are the key to understanding the difference between employer and employee perceptions of productivity. Employees tend to consider their commute as time dedicated to work; an employee whose commute is half an hour in each direction and who spends eight hours in the office considers nine hours of their total day dedicated to work. However, a manager only sees that the employee has accomplished their regular workload in their standard amount of time (eight hours). An employee that works from home doesn’t lose the hour of their day to a commute, meaning that their understanding of their workday (eight hours) aligns with their employer’s.¹⁶

2. **What trips occur:** Telework might alleviate peak-hour congestion, but research suggests that its ultimate relationship to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) may be more complex. Teleworkers may live further from their offices, so if they ever do commute, they travel longer distances. Remote workers also been found to take more unlinked, discretionary trips during the day, instead of compiling all errands into their physical commute home from work.^{17;18}

¹⁴ One study of employees at a travel agency in China who were randomly assigned the ability to work from home found that the teleworkers were 13 percent more productive than the control group of office workers.

Nicholas Bloom et al., “Does Working from Home Work? Evidence from a Chinese Experiment,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 130, Issue 1 (2015), 165–218, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/gju032>.

¹⁵ <https://www.miamidadetpo.org/library/studies/mdtpo-telecommute-study-final-report-2021-01.pdf>

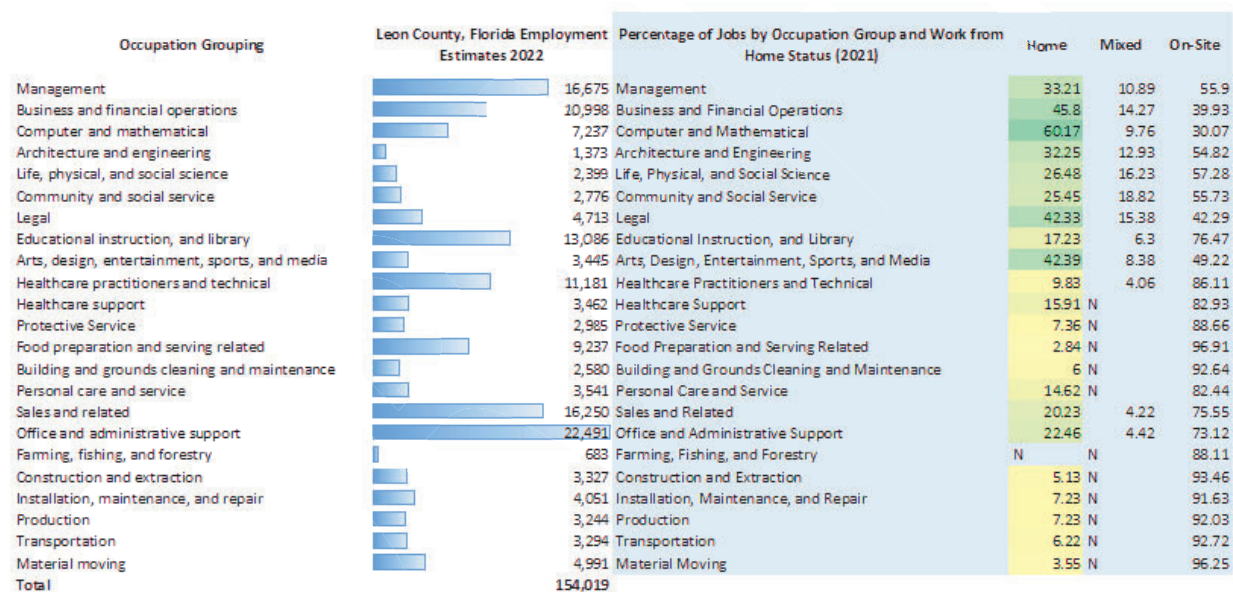
¹⁶ Barrero et al.

How Has Telecommuting Changed the Capital Region?

According to ACS data, the number of people teleworking in Leon County increased from 5.5 percent in 2019 to 19.3 percent in 2021. Previous year-over-year increases were minimal, from 3.5 percent of the population working from home in 2017 to 5.3 percent in 2018.

Figure 3 shows the rate of remote work by occupation in Leon County as estimated by ACS data.¹⁷ The top four occupation groupings (administrative support, management, sales, and education) all have around 25 percent of employees working at least one day a week from home. Management, the occupation with the second-highest number of employees in Leon County, has approximately 44 percent of its employees on a full or hybrid telework schedule.

Figure 3. Leon County Remote Work by Industry (2022 Estimates)



Data Source: ACS B24060: Occupation by Class of Worker for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over.

Data Source: Census/Employment/Industry and Occupation.

Figure 4 shows the rate of telework by county and by year pulled from Replica¹⁸. Data for 2020 was unavailable due to the volatility of the year, however we can assume that the rate of telework was significantly higher in 2020 (likely more than double compared to 2021). This chart then shows a relative stabilization of telework rates since peak-pandemic, and that even with significantly higher rates of remote work adoption than pre-pandemic congestion has returned.

¹⁷ At the time of this analysis, the relevant 2022 ACS dataset was predicted data. This study uses 2021 finalized ACS numbers to better reflect existing conditions.

¹⁸ [Replica](#) is a software that incorporates anonymized data from a variety of sources like the US Census Bureau, mobile location data, land use, economic activity, and others to create a simulation of an area to model how people get around, where they are going, and when they travel.

Figure 4. Percentage of Employees Working from Home (Replica)

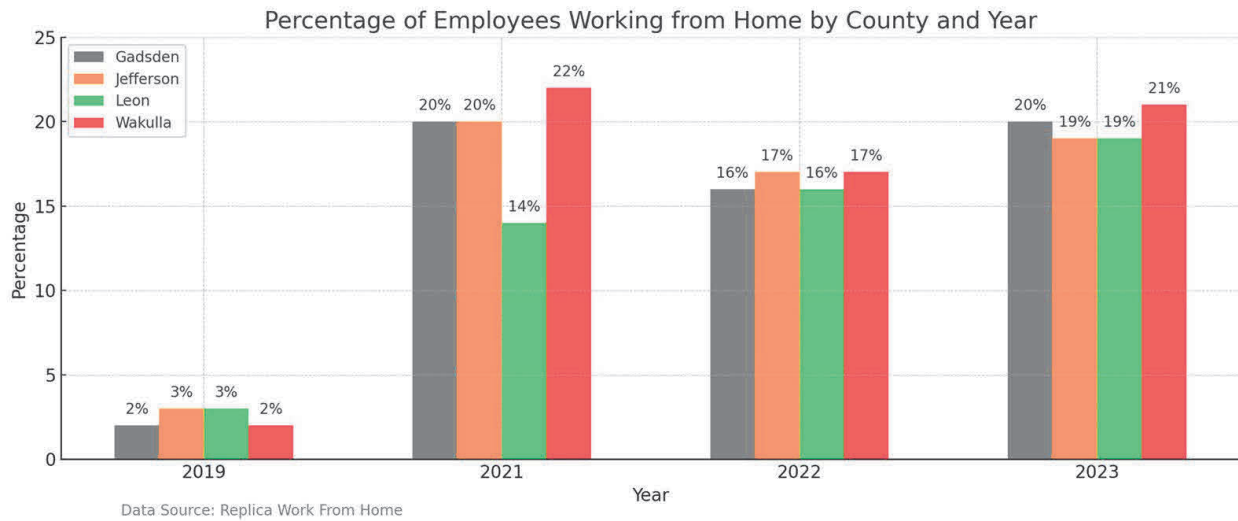


Figure 5 breaks down the 44,000 jobs in the CRTPA area that potentially allow for telecommuting either fully or in a hybrid manner. The possible metrics that can track telework readiness, adoption, and costs/benefits include:

- Average commute times.
- Number of teleworkers in region and average value of commute-time savings.
- Number of employers by size which have a telework policy.
- Amount of office vacancies.

Figure 5. Available Regional Remote Jobs by Industry

| Occupation Grouping | Full Remote Jobs | Hybrid Jobs |
|--|------------------|--------------|
| Management | 5,538 | 1,816 |
| Business and financial operations | 5,037 | 1,569 |
| Computer and mathematical | 4,355 | 706 |
| Architecture and engineering | 443 | 178 |
| Life, physical, and social science | 635 | 389 |
| Community and social service | 706 | 522 |
| Legal | 1,995 | 725 |
| Educational instruction, and library | 2,255 | 824 |
| Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media | 1,460 | 289 |
| Healthcare practitioners and technical | 1,099 | 454 |
| Healthcare support | 551 | 0 |
| Protective Service | 220 | 0 |
| Food preparation and serving related | 262 | 0 |
| Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance | 155 | 0 |
| Personal care and service | 518 | 0 |
| Sales and related | 3,287 | 686 |
| Office and administrative support | 5,051 | 994 |
| Farming, fishing, and forestry | 0 | 0 |
| Construction and extraction | 171 | 0 |
| Installation, maintenance, and repair | 293 | 0 |
| Production | 235 | 0 |
| Transportation | 205 | 0 |
| Material moving | 177 | 0 |
| Total | 34,647 | 9,153 |

Source: *Employees by Occupation Grouping (ACS B24060: Occupation by Class of Worker for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over) x Percent of Employees by Occupation Working from Home (Census/Employment/Industry and Occupation)*

Building upon this report, the CRTPA could consider implementing a regularly distributed survey within the region to track sentiments and availability of remote work by employers and employees. The SANDAG study cited earlier is one example of how this might be implemented.

How Has Congestion Changed Since the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Major commuter corridors in Leon County experienced significant reduction in volumes and delay in both peak and off-peak hours in 2020, when COVID-19 pandemic telecommute practices were at their height. The acute phase of the pandemic is over; as such, traffic has steadily crept back to pre-pandemic conditions. Today in the region most major employers have resumed normal operations and consequently peak-hour congestion has also returned, nearing the highest levels the region has witnessed. The 2022

volumes on I-10, Blountstown Highway, Meridian Road, and Apalachee Parkway are within seven percent of 2019 counts, according to data pulled from Florida Traffic Online.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer a public health emergency, the lessons it taught us about work and telecommuting are likely to stay with us. Although not all peak-hour trips are commute related, we know now that strategically reducing transportation demand by commuters can have a significant impact on congestion in the four-county region.

Additionally, although remote work is not at the peak it was during the pandemic, many employers are more willing to expand telework options to employees than they were before the pandemic. A 2020 statewide survey of employees and employers found that the percentage of teleworking employees jumped from 31 percent to 60 percent at the height of the pandemic. After the pandemic, the number dropped to 47 percent.¹⁹

The CRTPA, as well as its stakeholders and local employers, can play a productive role in improving regional travel and in reducing congestion. Support for telecommuting, though diminished, has remained strong since the pandemic first made it a necessity. As such, the opportunity exists to capitalize on telecommuting's remaining momentum by studying its benefits and understanding what employers in the region find effective and challenging about implementing remote work policies.

Key Takeaways:



The CRTPA can **encourage buy-in** to a telework program by communicating the benefits of telework to employers and direct them to available resources, such as RideOn or as provided in this study.



There are approximately **40,000 employees working fully remote or hybrid schedules** in the region.



Successful telecommuting programs require structure and resources, including equipment, childcare, and channels for dialogue between employer and employee.



Centering telework in a TDM program can incentivize employers to prioritize **sustainability, active transportation, and modal choice** in their projects.

To learn more about the benefits of telecommuting and existing local, state, and federal TDM policies see Appendix A: Literature Review. (Being finalized)

“Employees who utilize telecommuting often demand less compensation, leading to cost savings for employers.” – Miami-Dade TPO Telecommute Study (2021)

¹⁹ “Miami-Dade TPO Telecommute Study Final Report,” Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization, January 2021, <https://www.miamidadetpo.org/library/studies/mdtpo-telecommute-study-final-report-2021-01.pdf>.

Case Study—San Diego Region and Telework Sentiments 2021 & 2023

The San Diego Association of Governments surveyed businesses and employees in the San Diego region in 2021²⁰ and 2023²¹ to understand the changing trends in remote work policies, practices, and sentiment. While each region’s experience with telework is unique and nuanced, the SANDAG findings may provide insights into how telework could affect the CRTPA region.

Noteworthy Findings

- **Telecommuting has remained beyond the worst of the pandemic:**
 - The percentage of employees who report being able to work remotely is higher than pre-pandemic, but lower than in 2021.
- **Hybrid or mixed telework schedules are most prevalent:**
 - Roughly one in 10 employees say they are fully remote.
 - In 2023, 37 percent of businesses allowed their hybrid employees the flexibility to choose their remote days.
 - Meanwhile, in 2023, only 15 percent of businesses did not allow their hybrid employees the flexibility to choose their remote days.
- **When it comes to offering remote work, employer size matters:**
 - Smaller businesses (one to four employees) are less likely to offer remote work. When they do offer it, however, they offer it to a larger share of their employees.
 - In 2023, 30 percent of smaller businesses reported offering telecommute opportunities to more employees.²²
 - Some larger businesses (50 employees or more) are moving towards bringing employees into the office. Of the larger employers, 61 percent reported making telework available to fewer employees since 2021.
- **Businesses are acclimating to telecommuting:**
 - Nearly half (46 percent) of businesses reported feeling better about remote work now than they did during the pandemic.
 - Roughly the same percent (47 percent) reported reducing their square footage or terminating leases as a result of telecommuting.
 - While businesses reported a variety of perspectives on the benefits of telework, they concurred that the practice improved employee morale, business overhead, and the ability to retain good employees. This sentiment grew from 2021 to 2023. In fact, 24 percent of employers reported that inflexible or stringent remote work policies have *negatively* impacted their ability to hire and retain qualified employees.²³

²⁰ “Remote Work Policies and Practices: Surveys of Businesses and Employees in the San Diego Region,” SANDAG, April 2021, <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/data-and-research/applied-research-and-performance-monitoring/surveys/remote-work-policies-and-practices-survey-2021-04-16.pdf>.

²¹ “Remote Work Policies and Practices: Tracking Surveys of Businesses and Employees in the San Diego Region,” SANDAG, June 2023, <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/data-and-research/applied-research-and-performance-monitoring/surveys/remote-work-tracking-survey-2023-11-06.pdf>.

²² “Remote Work in the San Diego Region. Transportation Committee Presentation,” SANDAG, December 1, 2023, [Microsoft PowerPoint - Item 6 – Telework 2023.pptx \(legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/data-and-research/applied-research-and-performance-monitoring/surveys/remote-work-2023-11-06.pdf)

²³ “Infobit: Remote Work in the San Diego Region Post-Pandemic,” SANDAG, November 2023, <https://www.sandag.org/-/media/SANDAG/Documents/PDF/data-and-research/applied-research-and-performance-monitoring/surveys/infobits-remote-work-2023-11-06.pdf>

SANDAG Study Noteworthy Findings (Cont.)

Challenges remain: Employers continue to view remote work as negatively impacting teamwork, productivity, communication, and the ability to identify and manage poor performers.

Local and Regional Voices on Telecommuting and Travel Demand Management

Data offers crucial insights into the way telecommuting can shape communities, but it doesn't tell the whole story. To get an on-the-ground understanding of how increased telework would affect the region, the CRTPA conducted interviews with stakeholders who have relevant experience with telecommuting. The stakeholders include:

Partner Agencies

- Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality (OEV)
- Apalachee Regional Planning Council (ARPC) RideOn program
- Central Florida Commuter Services

Employers

- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU)
- Florida State University (FSU)

The perspectives from these partner agencies and local employers offer insight to the opportunities and challenges unique to implementing a telecommuting programs in the Capital Region. This section summarizes key takeaways from those stakeholder interviews.

Partner Agency Interview Key Highlights

- One of the Leon County's biggest private employers, Danfoss TurboCor, requires everyone to work in person. (OEV)
- Unemployment in Leon County is at an all-time low (2.5 percent), putting employees and job seekers in a position of leverage and allowing them to negotiate telecommuting as part of a compensation package. (OEV)
- Commercial office space and mixed-use vacancy rates have declined post-pandemic. (OEV)
- OEV is attempting to attract professional services, healthcare, transportation, manufacturing, and IT to Tallahassee. With a few exceptions, most of these industries allow for telecommuting. (OEV)
- There is a balance between obligating employees to report in an office and giving them volunteer opportunities to report. (ARPC)
- A significant number of Central Florida businesses have a hybrid policy, allowing employees to work from home some days of the week, but the current push is to get staff back in the office. (Central Florida Commuter Services)
- Employer engagement on TDM strategies like vanpooling and ridesharing were identified as primary approaches in lessening the number of commuters. Engagement includes discussing workplace needs to develop a telecommuting policy that meets unique employer context. (Central Florida Commuter Services)
- Lake Nona was identified as a community intentionally equipped to allow people to work from home because of its significant investment in broadband. (Central Florida Commuter Services)
- Several stakeholders requested or suggested development of a toolkit that could be provided to employers to assist with managing remote workers.

Employer Interview Key Highlights

Florida A&M University (FAMU)

- FAMU is evaluating peer strategies to inform the development of its own approach to telecommuting.
- Many FAMU departments allow staggered work schedules.
- FAMU has no formal policy with regards to providing teleworkers with internet and equipment for an in-house office setup.

Florida State University (FSU)

- People working for the university, outside of teaching and hands-on positions, are afforded opportunities to work from home.
- FSU allows employees to opt in to hybrid work schedules, with positions allocating three in-office work days and two telework days per week. This approach started as a pilot during the pandemic and is now evolving into policy.
- Prior to memorializing this approach to work scheduling, FSU also researched what other universities are doing elsewhere to assess effectiveness.
- In order to facilitate work-life balance, FSU also offers staggered work schedules or four-tens (working 10-hour days four days a week).
- FSU offers fully remote positions when recruiting competitive positions or for positions that struggle to retain employees.
- FSU provides equipment (such as a computer and monitors) and an internet allowance for people hired into fully remote positions. These resources are not provided to employees who opt in to telework, as the university provides equipment for these workers on campus.

Case Study—Four Developments in Florida Telecommuting

Florida Department of Transportation: The "reThink Your Commute" and "RideOn" programs encourage businesses and employees to collaboratively explore new ways of arriving to and being at work. The programs offer a range of TDM services and resources which support commuters and employers in adopting smart transportation solutions, including a telework consulting showcase.

Miami-Dade TPO Telecommute Study: In 2021, the Miami-Dade TPO Telecommute Study found that 30 percent of employees in Miami-Dade County already work flexible schedules, including telecommuting. The study summarizes the thoughts of employers, students, and employees who were asked about their attitudes toward telework pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and anticipated attitude post-pandemic. The survey also identifies the top benefits and challenges to remote work as perceived by community stakeholders. Benefits included better work-life balance and higher work productivity. Challenges included difficulty supervising and socializing.

Florida Employee Handbook Policy 2023 Update: The updated 2023 State of Florida Employee Handbook Policy states that an employee's choice of workplace does not undermine the employer's control over matters such as contracts, termination, and related issues.

Florida State Employee Telework Program: State employees can telework under Florida Statutes Chapter 110, Section 171. The regulations require that every agency implementing a telework program must assess all existing positions and identify those positions that the agency considers suitable for telework. Agencies must establish criteria for assessing performance of remote workers. The policies protect the equal rights of teleworkers as compared to non-teleworking employees, such as eligibility for advancement and compensation for overtime and travel reimbursement.

Read more in Appendix A: Literature Review (Being finalized)

Looking Ahead: Modeling the Region’s Future with Telecommuting

Models can help us visualize how different hypothetical real-world scenarios could impact travel conditions. Although they can yield insight into future conditions, models are neither perfect nor precise, and their findings should be considered as only one datapoint of many when making decisions.

Modeled Scenarios:

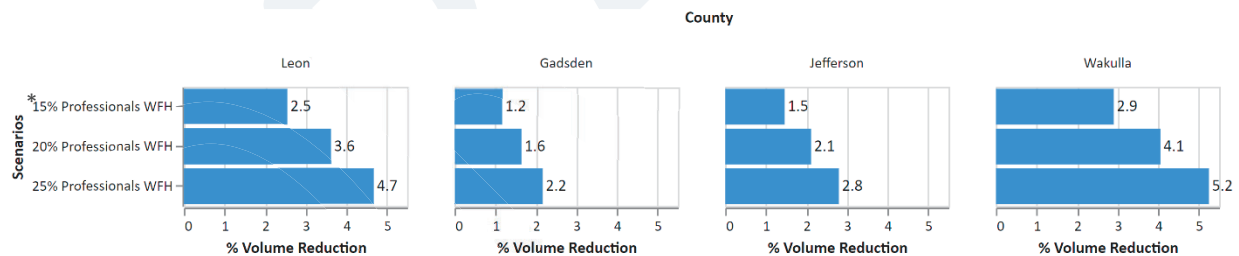
It is helpful to model different scenarios to determine a range of potential outcomes. In this case, three assumed telecommuting saturation rates were chosen to represent low, medium, and high rates of telework in the future.

- Low (15 percent of total regional workforce)²⁴: Based on the telework rate for Leon County in 2022.
- Medium (20 percent of total regional workforce): Assumes partial implementation of policy incentives and support structures enabling/encouraging a slight increase of telework adoption.
- High (25 percent of total regional workforce): Assumes policy incentives and telecommuting technology advancing to support increased telework adoption.

How Do Different Telework Adoption Rates Affect Traffic Volumes Overall in 2045 By County?

The Northwest Florida Regional Planning Model developed by FDOT District 3 uses a roadway network that includes all improvements planned to be completed by 2045. When considering traffic on all types of roadway facilities in each county, Wakulla County is projected to have the greatest reduction in vehicle volumes for each scenario, and Gadsden County the least.

Figure 6. Volume Reduction

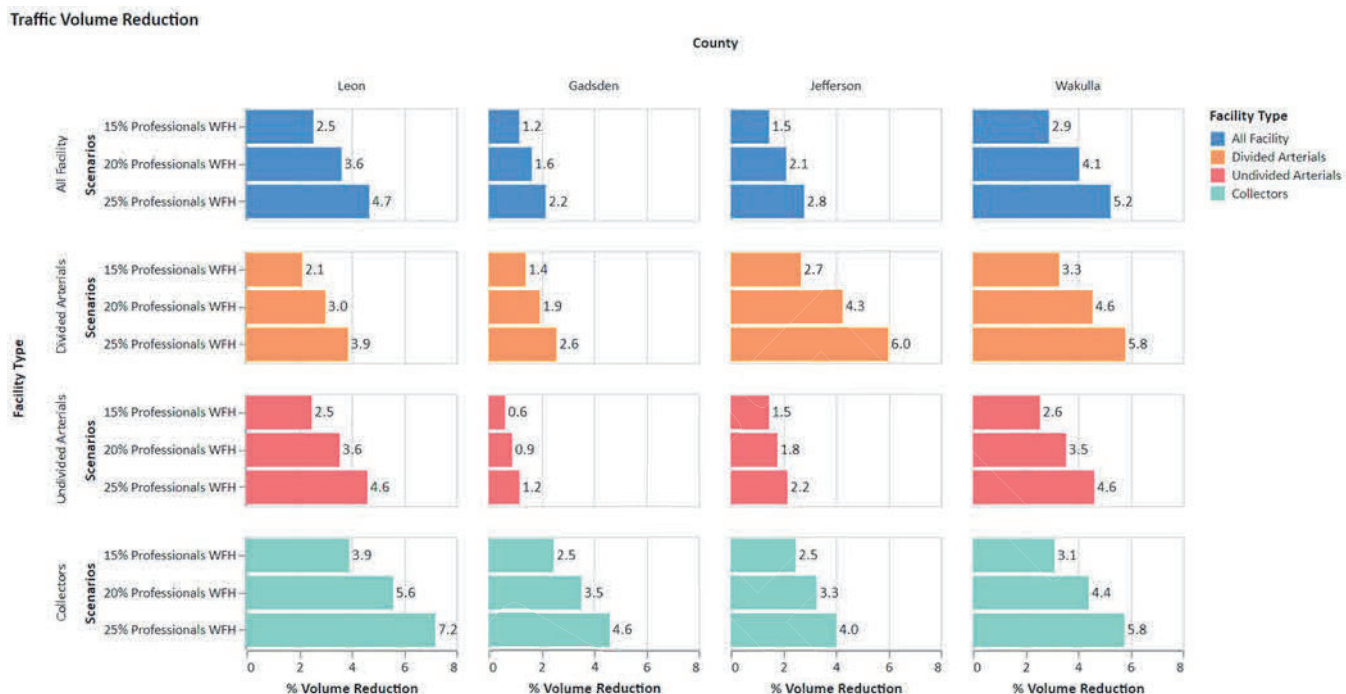


(*A professional position is a job suitable for telework.)

Different types of trips are taken on different roadway types. Minor arterials and collectors are intended to serve more localized traffic, while major arterials and divided highways have higher speeds, serve more vehicles, and are more appropriate for longer trips. Collectors are estimated to experience the largest percent decrease of traffic volumes in Leon County, whereas divided arterials are estimated to experience the largest percent decrease in Wakulla County. Overall volume reductions by scenario are shown by the blue bars in Figure 6.

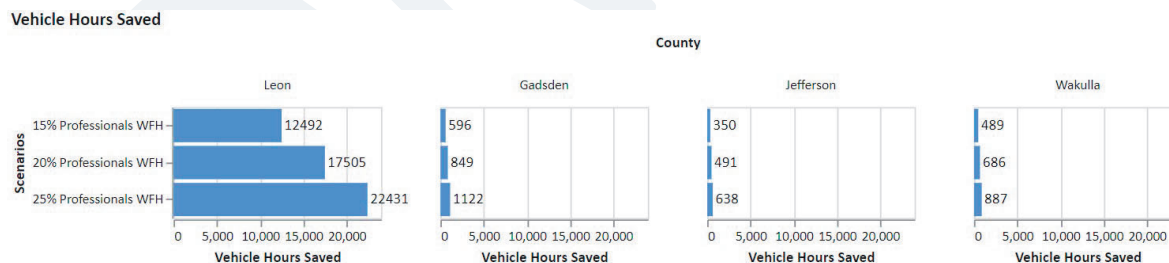
²⁴ As reported by Replica. Differences in the final modeled telework rate and the telework rate in the Replica figures for Leon County are due to rounding.

Figure 7. Volume Reduction by Facility Type



While fewer vehicles on the road can be equated with less congestion, one of the telling model outputs is the number of vehicle hours saved. Leon County, because it's the CRTPA county with the most vehicles on its roads, is projected to save the largest number of vehicle hours in the 25 percent adoption scenario—roughly two and a half years' worth.

Figure 7. Vehicle Hours Saved by County and Scenario



Recommendations

Traffic congestion has economic costs, delays commuters, impacts air quality, and causes mental stress. Jurisdictions and employers can use TDM strategies to combat these adverse community and personal impacts, whether through encouraging alternate travel modes, different travel patterns, or reducing single-occupancy vehicle use.

The pandemic demonstrated that telecommuting is another viable, scalable TDM strategy that productively reduces commuter-related congestion in the region. Although the pandemic built a rapid telework scaffolding for employers, if an employer chooses to implement a comprehensive, cohesive

telecommuting program to support the region in the long term (as opposed to as a stopgap during an emergency), the following recommendations should provide a baseline roadmap for implementation.

1

First Thing's First: Set Your Goals

Successful remote work is inherently dependent upon context. The availability of broadband, the makeup of major employers in the region, and the availability of a separate workspace at home away from distractions are just a few of the many factors which influence the feasibility of at-scale telework adoption in a community. Where some regions may use telework to reduce climate impacts, others may use the strategy to bring jobs to rural workers or improve economic competitiveness.

The CRTPA has documented that telework reduces peak-hour congestion. The purpose of the report is not only to assess teleworking impacts on the transportation network, but also to provide employers with relevant material on developing, guiding, and refining a telework program. Clear goals and objectives with milestones are critical to assessing the effectiveness of any effort.

2

Next: Add Some Definition to Your Vision

To develop and implement a telecommuting program successfully, **know your stakeholders.** Who are the target industries? What are their resource and communication needs? What are their limitations? Are there any underrepresented stakeholders who can contribute a valuable perspective? Consider establishing an advisory committee with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; this committee will give the program visibility and legitimacy as well as a space for stakeholders to provide key perspectives.

3

Then: Craft Your Toolkit

The literature review, case studies, and stakeholder interviews reveal the challenges facing the adoption of telework. **Preparing employers and stakeholders with “toolkit essentials” can help simplify the integration of telework into their workflows.**

Toolkit for Teleworker Success

- **Equipment:** A one-time equipment fund and/or internet stipend provides equitable access to needed supplies. Employers may consider supplying employees with equipment (such as a laptop, webcam, headset, microphone, and/or monitor) or providing a list of IT-approved remote work gear.
- **Scheduling:** Alternative scheduling comes in many forms, from staggered start times and four-tens, to hybrid telework with at least one weekday in-office, to fully remote. Employees that have the option to telework and to choose their remote days may have higher job satisfaction and/or be willing to accept reduced salary and benefits compensation. Opting in allows employees to optimize the effectiveness of telecommuting by choosing a schedule that works for their unique needs.
- **Training and support:** Telework comes with a learning curve thanks to its unique IT and task-reporting procedures, reliance on software and equipment, risk of isolation and siloing, and home distractions. Companies should make sure to proactively provide training and easy tech support to remote workers.
- **Open communication and socialization:** Communication is key! Prepare workplace infrastructure that allows for easy dialogue between employees and aim to understand what resources

employees need to succeed in a telework position. Co-working spaces, which are often nearer to the employee than their physical office, can reduce isolation.

Toolkit for Employer Success

- **Adopt telework policies:** These will guide how telework will be implemented by the organization. The policy can include a rubric to screen employees for potential success as a teleworker. Telework policies can address the purpose of the operation, provide definitions, identify positions eligible for telework, address equipment and security needs, and establish requirements and procedures for teleworker.
- **Sample employee agreements:** Especially for hybrid, fully remote, and staggered schedules. Agreements should include performance measures and regular (quarterly or annual) renewal clauses.
- **Sample workplace arrangements:** Especially for hot desking (a hybrid workplace system where employees have the ability to use available desks at different times) and remote work hub arrangements. Include a breakdown of the benefits, costs, and limitations of each arrangement.
- **Data security:** As telework moves work online and into the cloud, companies grow more at risk to cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Data security is routinely identified as an obstacle for employers considering telework. Firms should complete an assessment of their network vulnerabilities and ability to deploy telework capability at scale. Employees should receive regular data security training and cybersecurity competency assessments.
- **Guidance for managing remote workers:** A primary apprehension of employers considering telework is their inability to monitor an employee's productivity while teleworking. Providing guidance on this question can set expectations for routine check-in meetings to review and discuss specific work assignments, due dates, and productivity. Expectations for employee responsiveness and communication protocols can also be a part of the guidance.
- **Broadband access:** Access to quality internet service is crucial to successful telework. When implementing a telecommute program it is essential to assess broadband coverage and level of service for viability of remote work. Encouraging employees to remote work in work hubs can combat coverage gaps.

Figure 8. Example Telework Feasibility Assessment for Rutgers Employees (Appendix B) (Being finalized)



Feasibility Assessment Telecommuting Policy

This document is used to help the supervisor determine the feasibility of a particular position and/or employee to be engaged in a telecommuting agreement. The document will also assess the employee's and supervisor's work styles and determine if the styles would support a telecommuting arrangement.

Name of Telecommuter: _____

Position Title: _____

Name of Supervisor: _____

Department/Unit: _____

Job Assignments and Duties

The position must be classified as "NL" (not subject to overtime) Managerial, Professional, Supervisory or Confidential position.

List the key duties and percentage of time allocated to each duty.

1. _____ % _____
2. _____ % _____
3. _____ % _____
4. _____ % _____
5. _____ % _____

Employee Assessment

This section will help you determine if the position's key duties lend themselves to telecommuting.

- Do key duties require ongoing access to equipment, materials, and files that can only be accessed on Rutgers property? Yes No
- Do key duties require extensive face-to-face contact with supervisors, other employees, clients, or the public on Rutgers property? Yes No
- Do key duties require extensive time in meetings or performing work on Rutgers property?

4

Set an Evaluation Framework

Set performance criteria that match the program goals and objectives. Monitoring outcomes against milestones ensures that employers can track trends and provide a measuring stick for accountability.

Note that it may be valuable to consider the potential for unintended consequences and how to proactively spot them. For example, some studies have shown that telework is associated with decreased peak-hour congestion *but* that it increases discretionary midday trips, which creates an overall increase in vehicle miles traveled. In addition, current land uses and future planning should consider the implications of a future where nearly one in four people works from home. Developing smaller office spaces and increasing mixed land use can prevent localities from becoming the "ghost towns" that business districts have become in the age of popularized telework.

5

Finally: Shout it From the Rooftops!

It's not always enough to be a repository of resources. Proactively educating employers on the benefits of telework and making resources available that fit their needs will increase the likelihood of adoption in the region. Understand local employer needs and what additional resources may need to be developed to address their concerns or overcome their limitations.

Supporting Policies

Although an effective tool to address peak-hour congestion, a telework program is not the only TDM measure. A comprehensive TDM program is multifaceted and multipronged, employing complementary measures to encourage alternative modes such as carpooling, vanpooling, and transit. Educational campaigns are a great way to supplement efforts to mode shift, and proactively making alternative modes more accessible to residents can help incentivize their use.

In addition to teleworking, stakeholders, employers, and employees may choose to transform regional commute behavior by:



Carpooling: Coordinated employee programs which help match staff with viable carpool and vanpool partners. Creating preferred / priority parking spaces nearest the office in the parking lot for carpool and vanpools incentivizes ridesharing.



Riding (and subsidizing) transit: Subsidized transit passes may make transit more accessible, and commuter express buses may make transit faster, but neither of these features alone can encourage ridership if transit is infrequent or unreliable. Transit priority infrastructure, such as bus-only lanes, queue jumps, and bus bulb-outs, are roadway treatments that help reduce transit delay and increase reliability. Transit priority measures can be folded into any project which reconfigures or repaves a roadway. Improving the viability of transit increases the efficiency of a corridor.



Supporting complementary development: Incorporating clearly crafted, achievable TDM into the development process can help proactively create more livable communities in Tallahassee and the surrounding area by ensuring future development will balance active forms of transportation. If implemented, the TDM program should have monitoring and reporting requirements to track implementation and to gauge the success of the program.