

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: June 24, 2020

From: MITCH WEISS, Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.26, Information

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Subject: Telework and Transportation

Summary:

At the May 13, 2020 California Transportation Commission (Commission) meeting, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was asked by Commissioners what could be done by state government regarding telework and its effect on the state's transportation system. It was noted that telework could have important benefits related to air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and traffic congestion.

Ellen Greenberg, Caltrans Deputy Director for Sustainability, will present information on the state's efforts as it relates to telework and transportation.

Background:

On March 19, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide stay at home order to protect public health and slow the spread of COVID-19. The order had an enormous impact on travel throughout the state. An April 3, 2020 report by the University of California, Davis, Road Ecology Center, found that peak-period traffic volumes declined by 30 percent to 50 percent for a select set of highways across the state. The same center issued another report on April 30, 2020, that found, nationally, vehicle miles traveled declined by 61 percent to 90 percent and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector declined 13 percent.

While travel for a wide variety of purposes has been affected by the stay at home order, travel for work in particular was impacted as many employees began to work from home. According to the Brookings Institution, up to half of American workers were working from home, more than double the fraction who worked from home (at least occasionally) in 2017-18. It is uncertain how many of these workers will continue to work from home after the stay at home order is fully lifted, but traffic volumes have been increasing in recent weeks since the state entered the second of its four-stage re-opening process.