



Kern COG Chairman and Executive Director Interviewed About Telecommuting Post COVID-19

Kern COG Chairman Bob Smith and Executive Director Ahron Hakimi were interviewed recently by Bob Price concerning what the workplace might look like post COVID-19. The question asked was "what if, after this virus is acceptably contained and the economy can reopen, people kept their cars in the garage, say one day a week? That would be 20 percent less weekday traffic,



20 percent less weekday pollution, perhaps even 20 percent cleaner air. Less asthma, less heart disease." The idea, as Kern COG Executive Director Ahron Hakimi explains, is for businesses to allow employees to work from home at least one day a week.



Chairman and Bakersfield City Councilmember Bob Smith, an avid cyclist, said "most of us have been practicing telecommuting long enough now to make it a permanent practice without much trouble." He added "a lot of people have been forced to try it, through this (pandemic), and the technology's gotten to a point where it's easier and easier for people."

How might this work? Executive Director Hakimi stated: "The employer would be able to select whether it's a Monday or Tuesday or (whatever)," Hakimi said. "The idea is not to have great air quality on Mondays and Fridays only, but spread it out throughout the week."

As brutal as this pandemic has been for the economy, it undeniably has some silver linings. We're walking more, biking more, checking up on each other, and we're breathing more clean air, too. Now there's a movement to capture and hold those benefits.

Best Practices For Telework During COVID-19 and Beyond

Kern COG and its CommuteKern Rideshare Program are co-sponsoring, with central coast rideshare agencies, a series of telework webinars known as the "**Best Practices for Telework During COVID-19 and Beyond.**"

The first webinar addressed the **Best Practice Tips for Leading a Remote Team and Managing for Results.** Subsequent webinars will cover:

- May 14th Webinar 2: **Telework Best Practices for the New Normal.** Overcoming distractions, key strategies to improve efficiency and managing time effectively;
- May 21st Webinar 3: **What's Next? Incorporating Telework into your Business Strategy.** How to integrate telework into your business future; setting up a telework program the right way; understanding the impact of telework beyond 2020; and
- May 28th Webinar 4: **Real Conversations with Real Teleworkers and Employers.** How are teleworkers and employers coping during the pandemic, and suggestions of best practices.

All webinars are live from 1-2 p.m. (PST) and it's not too late to register through commutekern.org/events. Questions regarding these webinars can be addressed to our CommuteKern Rideshare Coordinator, Susanne Campbell at scampbell@kerncog.org.



Return of Manufacturing to the U.S.

A recent study shows that manufacturing is beginning to return to the U.S. largely due to tariffs, and now may be accelerating during the COVID-19 concerns about supply chains for nationally strategic products. Suburban areas near major metros with land available for large industrial development, like Kern, are anticipated to become major destinations for industry returning to the U.S. Kern has over 12-square miles of vacant, industrially zoned land ready for development. There are news reports that, like Japan, the federal government is considering further incentives to help repatriate manufacturing to the U.S. In the case of Japan, the Japanese government has identified over \$2 billion to help offset the cost of bringing back manufacturing and to improving automation to off-set higher costs of labor at home. Likewise, in the U.S. we are seeing accelerated implementation of automation. Kern is already seeing two new major automated facilities nearing completion (Amazon and Walmart DCs). In addition, Bakersfield Community College now offers a 4-year degree in industrial automation with the first year tuition free courtesy of the State of California. For more information visit <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/industrial-automation>. In the 2019 statistically valid Kern COG Quality of Life Survey, 6 out of 7 residents in Kern thought the new warehouse jobs were worth the increased traffic. COG staff is collaborating with the county, Shafter, Bakersfield and Caltrans on a study to address the potential impacts of increased truck traffic on our roadways. Another study, in partnership with UC Davis, is looking at the best clean truck technologies for the region.

Shafter Community Stays Strong During COVID-19



Despite being separated by distance, masks and a stay-at-home order, members of the Shafter community are confident this can still be a time to come together. The month of May has been dedicated as Shafter Strong Month. There will be a different theme each week, giving opportunity for the community to show unity and strength.

This first week in May, residents were encouraged to decorate their houses with patriotic items, such as flags, windsocks, door decorations and bunting. May 10-16, the second week, is Chalk Art Week. Residents can add patriotic or Shafter Strong-themed chalk art to their driveways and sidewalks, as well as use chalk to thank first responders and health care workers for their service to the community.

The third week in May is Light the Night Week. Community members are invited to display red, white and blue lights to their houses, windows and yards.

May 24-31, the fourth week, is Shafter Strong Patriotic Parade Week. Residents are encouraged to greet their neighbors while walking, biking, skateboarding or driving a car decorated patriotically. Flags, bandanas and posters are some of the possibilities.

The idea for the project was conceived by some residents who were frustrated with the inability to go about daily routines, meetings, etc., and wanted to do something.



Good job Shafter!

Upcoming Events

June 24 & 25 - California Transportation Commission Meeting in Sacramento

June 26 - San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council and Multi Agency Working Group (Housing) Meeting

August 12 & 13 - California Transportation Commission Meeting in Oakland