

The “GO-Virtual Initiative”: Using Flexible Workplace Practices to Reduce Traffic Congestion, Increase Economic Development, and Provide More Access to Affordable Housing Choices in the South Bay Region of Los Angeles County

Project 1860
August 2019

Fynnwin Prager, PhD, Mohja Rhoads, PhD, Jose N. Martinez, PhD,
Chris Cagle, Aaron Baum, and Jacki Bacharach



Flexible workplace practices (FWPs) such as telework, flexible scheduling, and the use of co-working spaces can address problems of congestion, pollution and lack of housing affordability in the South Bay region of Los Angeles County. However, trends in the adoption of FWPs—especially of working from home—across the region do not appear to be increasing as much as expected. Prior literature suggests this may be due to occupational and industry constraints, manager resistance, and employee concerns over work-life balance. The authors of this study contribute to the literature by focusing on the obstacles to expansion of FWPs among South Bay organizations, and by comparing the projected impacts of potential government interventions in this space.

Study Methods

After establishing a baseline assessment of current FWP usage rates in the South Bay, the authors explore these issues by combining surveys and expert elicitation focus groups covering numerous types of FWP, especially the inclusion of co-working spaces as a strategy.

Findings

Commute times and the proportion of residents driving alone to work in the study region have increased as the economy has grown. The only alternative to driving alone to increase in frequency in the study region is working from home, which appears to be concentrated in locations with higher education levels or more appropriate

occupations. Survey and focus group participants perceived the major obstacles to further expansion of FWP to be managerial and executive resistance, alongside occupational constraints. Participants perceived government subsidies and incentives as combining relatively low costs and high impacts for their workplaces, and possibly used for private co-working spaces, which offer a market solution that includes the benefits of traditional at-home telework and collaborative workspaces.

Policy Recommendations

Findings from surveys, focus groups, and interviews suggest that when governments are resource-constrained the effective programs are promotional campaigns, facilitation of co-working spaces, and workforce training programs. Government organizations can also lead by example. Public schools and colleges can expand FWPs for administrative staff and other public agencies can find innovative ways to implement FWPs, including telework facilities exchanges between local public organizations. If government organizations also wish to invest and lead on broader policy goals such as reducing commute-related emissions, then other options include the expansion of AQMD mandates to organizations employing fewer than 250 employees and tax credits for workforce training and program implementation.

Participants in the survey and focus groups perceived the major obstacles to expansion to be a combination of managerial and executive resistance, alongside occupational constraints.

About the Authors

Dr. Fynnwin Prager is Assistant Professor of Public Administration at California State University, Dominguez Hills, where he is Co-Director of the South Bay Economics Institute. Dr. Rhoads has spent over 10 years studying FWP and has published several articles and a dissertation on the subject. Dr. Martinez is Co-Director of the South Bay Economics Institute at CSUDH. Chris Cagle is the Regional Affairs Manager for the South Bay Workforce Investment Board and also serves as the organization's Marketing Director. Aaron Baum is an Environmental Analyst at the South Bay Cities Council of Governments. Jacki Bacharach has served as Executive Director of the SBCCOG since 1998.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/research/1860



MTI is a University Transportation Center sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology and by Caltrans. The Institute is located within San José State University's Lucas Graduate School of Business.