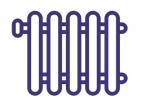# REPORT

from the ad hoc joint committee on professional air travel
presentation to ESC 10/5/23

BE BOUNDLESS

WHY WE'RE HERE: GAP IN OUR CARBON REDUCTION EFFORTS

Energy Transformation Strategy

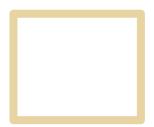Multiple strategies to reduce drive-alone commuting
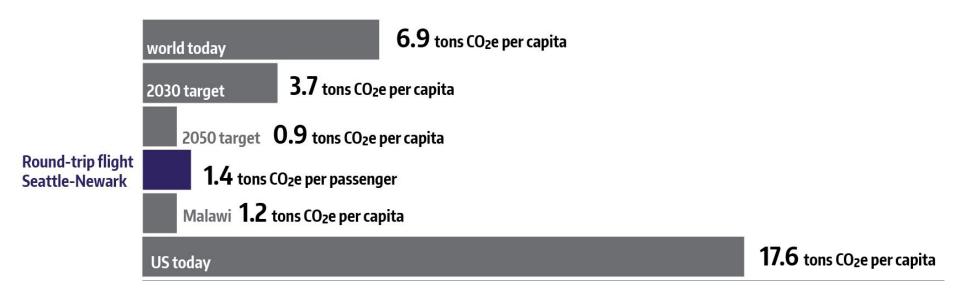
Green Building Standards

Increased offerings of local and plant-based food

WHY WE'RE HERE: IMPACT OF AIR TRAVEL

world today — 6.9 tons CO_2e per capita

2030 target — 3.7 tons CO_2e per capita

2050 target — 0.9 tons CO_2e per capita

Round-trip flight Seattle-Newark — 1.4 tons CO_2e per passenger

Malawi — 1.2 tons CO_2e per capita

US today — 17.6 tons CO_2e per capita

Sources: Our World in Data, IPCC, Atmosfair, World Inequality Report 2022.

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US today - richest 10% — **74.7** tons CO_2e per capita

Sources: Our World in Data, IPCC, Atmosfair, World Inequality Report 2022.

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WHAT WE SAID IN JUNE:

> Received input from FCPPS 6/1/23
> Will ask for endorsement ESC 6/21/23
> Will write up a proposed policy over the summer
> Will gather input from constituencies over the summer
> Will present to ESC in ~~September~~ October and FCCPS in November
> Aim to put before the Faculty Senate, BOR in November

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WHO WE ARE

Jamie Mayerfeld
faculty - Political Science

Jeremy Hess
faculty - Global Health

Gary Handwerk
faculty - Program on the Environment & English

Louise Simpson
staff - UW Medicine

Karen Baebler
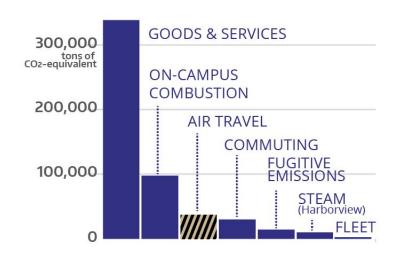*staff - Intercollegiate Athletics*
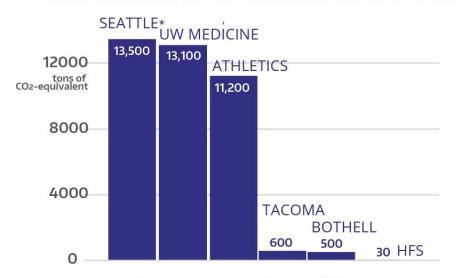
Theertha Shetty
graduate student - HCDE

Marilyn Ostergren
staff - UW Sustainability

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PREVIEW OF GHG INVENTORY

2022 GHG EMISSIONS BY CATEGORY

GOODS & SERVICES

ON-CAMPUS COMBUSTION

AIR TRAVEL

COMMUTING

FUGITIVE EMISSIONS

STEAM (Harborview)

FLEET

300,000 tons of CO₂-equivalent

200,000

100,000

0

2022 AIR TRAVEL EMISSIONS BY UNIT

SEATTLE*   UW MEDICINE

13,500   13,100

ATHLETICS

11,200

TACOMA

BOTHELL

600   500   30 HFS

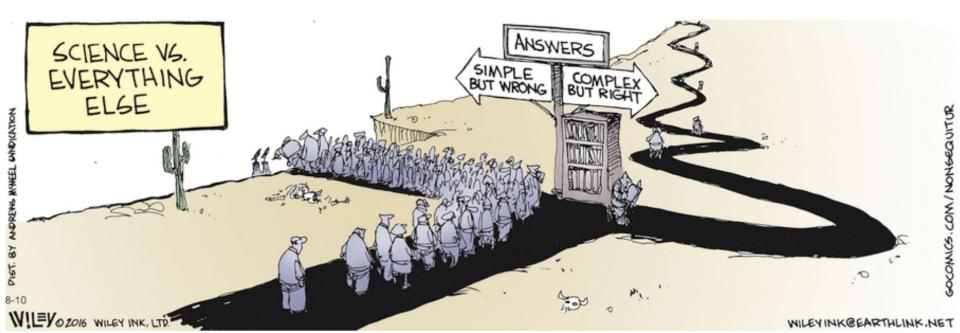12000 tons of CO₂-equivalent

8000

4000

0

*   "Seattle" excludes Medicine, Athletics & H&FS

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Focus Group Summary

> **People care about this issue, yet hold this alongside:**
> **People have compelling reasons to fly and express "We can't fly less" with some exceptions** (faculty recruitment, coach meetings have gone online, discourage flying locally for travel abroad students)
> **When presented with the concept of a fee, people have concerns about that fee**

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WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST

DRAFT POLICY: preview

Policy Statement
Applicability
Program Guideline Framework
Mitigation Fund
Accountability
Dates

DRAFT POLICY: Policy Statement

The University of Washington hereby establishes the Sustainable Connections program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with university-sponsored air travel. The primary goal of the Sustainable Connections Program is to significantly reduce air travel in accordance with the goals and targets established the University's Sustainability Action Plan, and the University's Zero Carbon Roadmap.

DRAFT POLICY: Applicability

This policy and corresponding Sustainable Connections Program is applicable to all UW-sponsored air travel

DRAFT POLICY: Program Guideline Framework

The University of Washington shall develop guidelines for the Sustainable Connections Program in accordance with this Administrative Policy 70.1. The Sustainable Connections Program Guidelines shall be published on the university's travel homepage.

The University of Washington's Sustainable Connections Program shall employ the following strategies and actions, including, but not limited to:

a. **Establish Ambitious Goals:** Set ambitious goals for flying reductions in line with the most current climate science (e.g. the latest IPCC Report).

b. **Minimize Unnecessary and Excessive Travel**

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DRAFT POLICY: Program Guideline Framework *cont.*

c.   **Facilitate Alternatives** such as:

    i.   Support videoconferencing and non-travel alternatives.

    ii.   Support low-carbon forms of travel.

d.   **Track and analyze air travel data**: Establish an organization-wide process to track air travel data. Monitor and report annually on progress in meeting program goals.

e.   **Educate:** Establish a Sustainable Connections education program for faculty, staff, and students.

DRAFT POLICY: Program Guideline Framework *cont.*

e.   **Embed/Integrate Across University Operations**

i.   **Establish a new position**, Sustainable Connections Program Manager, to implement the program. (note: Important to have a point person...they'll have to invent the job .. ask to be centrally implemented for the first 3 years)

ii.   **Integrate flying reduction goals and best practices** in all university plans and practices.

iii.   **Assist units in developing plans** to implement the Sustainable Connections Program and achieve program goals.

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DRAFT POLICY: Program Guideline Framework *cont.*

g. **Establish an Air Travel Mitigation Fund**
    Create a monetary mechanism that provides a nexus to the pollution resulting from UW-sponsored air travel. This mechanism can incentivize alternatives to air travel, and pay for direct emissions reductions actions in University operations.

INTEGRATE EQUITY

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DRAFT POLICY: Mitigation Fund

The Air Travel Mitigation Fund's (ATMF) purpose is to significantly reduce the University of Washington's carbon footprint from air travel by funding on-campus projects which result in lasting measurable carbon reduction.

a. **ATMF funding shall be spent on**:

    i. **Program implementation**, including personnel costs, administrative costs, program resources, etc.

    ii. **GHG Reduction Projects** that have a measurable carbon reduction in university operations.

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DRAFT POLICY: Accountability

- **UW Sustainability**, in partnership with the **Environmental Stewardship Committee**, is responsible for developing and updating the Program Guidelines.
- **UW Sustainability** is responsible for implementation of the Sustainable Connections Program, including the Air Travel Mitigation Fund (e.g. applications, criteria, processes, etc).
- **UW Sustainability** and **UW Finance** are responsible for gathering and tracking flight data associated with this policy.
- **UW Sustainability** will provide an annual program update and progress towards achieving UW's air travel reduction goals to the Faculty Senate, the President and Board of Regents and other entities that request an update.

NOTE: Fund management policies are yet to be determined

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DRAFT POLICY: DATES

- **Year 1-2**: Program start-up - focused on education and creating air travel reduction plans [no mitigation fee]
- **Year 3**: Launch implementation of an Air Travel Mitigation Fund
- **Year 4:** All components of Program are fully in effect.

CONVERSATION

Focus Group: Study Abroad

> It's a difficult issue: weight the value of foreign travel versus climate impacts.

> We need principles. These would include harm reduction & equity.

> $20 seems very small; not enough to be an incentive, but maybe a good start.

> What the fund would be used for? (Desire to see it used in the most effective way.)

> The campaign will be more meaningful if UW leadership is involved. This should be a presidential priority. We need to embrace this, make it our thing.

Focus Group: UW Athletics

 "The Department of Athletics feels strongly that intercollegiate athletics air travel should be considered separately from the current air travel proposal based on the following unique program mission and functions:

1. Athletic air travel is essential to our mission, purpose, and business model.

3. Decisions on scheduling which the need to travel are not made by the UW Athletic.

4. A carbon offset fee would not reduce air travel but would have a significant negative financial impact.

6. The Athletic Department is a self-sustaining unit and historically does not receive central funding for its operating budget.

8. UW Athletics contributes to reducing the University's carbon footprint in many ways – including LED lighting retrofits, ground travel reduction programs, water reduction practices, LEED certification for new and remodeled buildings, etc.

10. The Athletic Department supports the University's Climate Action Plan and looks forward to working with the Office of Sustainability to reduce our carbon impact.

Focus Group: Equity

> In the abstract very supportive of the concept, but it provokes strong feeling when thinking about the realities. One is that the university just declared that it will Join the Big 10. The irony of being asked to curtail travel while we fly the football team across the country is a hard sell.
> The University has "Haves and Have Nots" (some departments are well-financed, others struggle). There is a history of experiencing central policies that were labeled "equitable" but were, in fact, not equitable.
> It's difficult to reduce travel because of contractual obligations to fly (e.g. requirements of federal grants).
> Conferences are real opportunities for enhancing careers. It's hard to envision a world in which this works differently.

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Focus Group: College of the Environment

The group had skepticism that we can make major change, but also completely owned their responsibility and the dire nature of the threat of climate change.

They were very supportive of publishing flight data as a way to inform and encourage flight shaming while also rewarding those who find ways to reduce their impact. They felt they should publish the data with the messages:

- Here is our travel footprint
- Here is how we're monitoring it
- Here is how we're thinking about reducing it

They showed some concern that the policy might not have enough teeth

There was some appreciation for the idea of having a fee that supports carbon-reduction on campus or that goes back to units to reward them for their reduction efforts (perhaps this would take the form of giving the money to those who develop a creative and impactful way to reduce flying).

Focus Group: UW Medicine

> We need to be clear that our goal is to reduce emissions rather than reduce travel (this will meet immediate resistance).

> People will want to know the context in terms of what other institutions are doing. (Made reference to pride individuals at Seattle Children's feel around being part of an institution that is taking a leadership role in this area)

> There were some difference of opinion around whether reducing travel supports the mission at a larger scale (e.g. reduce health harms) or is in direct conflict with the mission of pursuing excellence in Medicine.

> There was appreciation for the fact that this is an area in which individuals can participate (by reducing their flights), but also recognize that it's ~unfair to burden people with choices that are in conflict with the systems that constrain them

> It's easier to switch behaviors than to stop behaviors

> Each unit has its own culture and what works in one unit won't work in another.