

TELEWORK

WITH SVEIN

I'm Svein Newman, Missoula County's Climate Action Program Manager. I live in the Southgate Triangle neighborhood and tend to work from home one or two days per week. Speaking from my personal experience **as a supervisor, an employee, and a climate professional, I'm a big supporter of telework** as a sustainable transportation option.

I appreciate that every workplace is some amount of different, and that even within workplaces, some departments or jobs have different requirements. But while it doesn't work for everyone, I think our society has learned, particularly since the start of COVID in early 2020, that it's a **great tool for many jobs**, and frequently an **important quality-of-life offering for employees**.

There have been quite a few studies that show that hybrid or remote staff are just as productive as their

fully office-based peers, and in some instances can be even **more productive due to fewer sick days and quieter work environments.**

The department where I work in the County has a hybrid system. Anecdotally, that's a good perk for us, and I'm confident it helps with recruitment and retention.

It also **has very real climate impacts.** As a government entity/workplace, employee commutes are responsible for 13% of Missoula County's greenhouse gas emissions. While that's smaller than our buildings or fleet, it's still pretty significant. And our inventory of our 2021 greenhouse gas emissions showed that the County's telecommuting policy had dropped those commute emissions by almost a third.

Is that transformational? Not necessarily. But it's a fairly easy way to make a **meaningful contribution to protecting our future** by using a tool that helps attract and retain a diverse, talented workforce and reduces operating costs at the same time. It can also reduce strain and commute times for more rural staff.

I appreciate that there are often cultural benefits to having employees work in an office together, and that there are some jobs that just can't be done remotely.

That said, I think teleworking is possible more often than it isn't, and is an important tool for employers to consider – not to mention that telework, hybrid, or flexible arrangements are an increasingly important preference, particularly for younger workers.

I love the opportunity to work from home sometimes. While I really enjoy our office atmosphere, comradery, and in-person opportunities for learning and mentorship, I also find that working from home gives me good uninterrupted time for writing and for reading/synthesizing (*particularly things like technical documents and plans*).

And on a personal level, it's great to have the flexibility on days when I have to do things like take our pets to the veterinarian, or if I have a doctor's appointment or even just work meetings on this side of town. **It saves me time and makes me feel valued.**
