

# Annual Telecommuting Report

## Telecommuting by Employees of State Government

- Of the 93,680 positions in the Commonwealth's Personnel Management Information System, 4,471 (4.8%) are designated eligible for telecommuting. Presently, 2,449 (2.6%) employees are telecommuting. This represents an increase of 1,674 employees or 216% from the last report.
- This data is based on information reported by agencies in the Personnel Management Information System. Although agencies have been reminded to update this information, it is felt that this data may not accurately reflect all telecommuting initiatives in the Commonwealth. We continue to remind agencies of the importance of accurately reporting in PMIS
- Because of the nature of many state agency operations, the extent of telecommuting from agency to agency varies greatly. Agency heads have to determine the feasibility of telecommuting and its compatibility with agency requirements. We continue to encourage agency heads to consider telecommuting as they develop their COOP plan and to use it whenever they can.
- Past actions related to telecommuting have included:
  - Communication on May 31, 2006, reminding Agency Human Resource Directors of the need to evaluate and designate positions appropriate for telecommuting, identify those employees in designated positions who are telecommuting, and to key both position and employee status into the Personnel Management Information System.
  - A presentation on Telework was prepared and delivered by IBM on July 21, 2006, to the Secretaries of: Administration, Technology and Transportation; staff from the Joint Council On Technology, Auditors of Public Accounts, Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and Virginia Information Technology Agency. The presentation included an overview of the current status of Telecommuting in the Commonwealth, as well as, barriers, challenges, and rewards of telecommuting.
  - Communication on August 8, 2006, to Agency Human Resource Directors to emphasize the importance of offering telecommuting and alternative work schedules for recruitment and retention of the Workforce of Tomorrow. Provided guidelines to assist in determining positions that are appropriate for telecommuting and provided a list of qualities that employees should possess to be successful in telecommuting.
  - A Survey to Agency Heads sent through the *Leadership Communique* consisting of 15 questions regarding status of Telecommuting in their agency. The survey not only included capturing the status of telecommuting for positions and employees, but also requested information about the cost of providing telecommuting, benefits realized, barriers encountered, incentives offered, equipment provided, and measures of productivity.

- There have been no requests from either localities or the private sector for assistance or advice in the planning, developing, and administering programs, projects, policies, or other activities to promote or encourage telecommuting of employees.

### **Telecommuting in the Private Sector** (Provided by DRPT)

#### **Virginia Transportation Agency Private Sector Telework Activities – FY06**

In fiscal year 2006, fifteen commuter assistance programs funded directly by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) continued to promote telework to private sector businesses as a means to reduce automobile trips, traffic congestion, air pollution, improve employee productivity and provide for improved quality of life in the Commonwealth. Additionally, Telework!VA, a private sector financial incentive pilot program sponsored by DRPT, was promoted in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads.

DRPT's goal is to provide a market-based telework program that can be customized to the unique local, regional or multi-regional business needs, while addressing traffic congestion issues. For highly congested areas, appropriate benchmarks are being established in FY07 for monitoring, reporting and performance evaluation purposes. The benchmarks will include trips reduced, emission reductions, time and cost saved.

As part of a VDOT/DRPT study conducted in 2001<sup>1</sup>, the Southeastern Institute of Research (SIR) performed a survey in the Richmond, Roanoke and Norfolk-Virginia Beach-Newport News (Hampton Roads) Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Teleworking participation rates were 8.3% in Richmond, 6.7% in Hampton Roads, and 4.7% in Roanoke. The Richmond area had the highest teleworking frequency also, averaging 2.35 days a week. 1.58 days in Hampton Roads and 1.79 days in Roanoke. In 2004 a study found that the Metropolitan Washington area had a telework participation rate of 12.8%.<sup>2</sup> The average teleworking participation rate across the state is approximately 8% (an estimated 260,000 teleworkers according to these studies). This is on par with the national average 8.5% (estimated 11.5 million teleworkers) for nearly the same time period (2000).

Telework!VA was developed by DRPT, using a market segmentation based approach to define an optimal private sector telework program. After piloting the program for two years in northern Virginia, DRPT looked for ways to improve the conversion ratio of inquiries to program participants. As a result, the program has increased flexibility, is simplified and is being rolled out in Hampton Roads and Richmond.

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<sup>1</sup> VDOT/DRPT Telework Study, Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc. for Parsons Transportation Group, October 2001

<sup>2</sup> 2004 State of the Commute Survey Results from the Washington Metropolitan Region, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, June 2005

The Telework!VA program is designed to be dynamic, evolving and adapting as the market demands. In fiscal year 2007, DRPT will work to develop a web resource available to businesses throughout the state. It will include on-line E-learning training modules, sample policies, testimonial reports, case histories and an employee handbook for planning and implementing an individualized company telework program. The information will be geared to both teleworkers and managers and include detailed instructions on how to set up and conduct a successful telework program. Training modules will employ state-of-the-art E-learning techniques designed to help overcome some of the major barriers to implementing a company telework program.

Additionally, DRPT will work to increase marketing and outreach efforts to energize the northern Virginia program and formally launch the programs in Richmond and Hampton Roads. Telework!VA's new monitoring program will evaluate the program's performance by tracking inquiries, site visits, conversions and completed programs. In general, DRPT will track the overall incidence of telecommuting in the urban areas by expanding the existing State of the Commute survey to Fredericksburg, Richmond and Hampton Roads. Conducted every three years, this survey will provide the telework benchmark and also track market share of all alternative modes.

Findings from the most recent State of the Commute survey conducted in 2004<sup>3</sup> by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in the Washington, D. C., metropolitan area, including northern Virginia, include:

***About one in eight regional commuters telecommutes, but potential exists for additional telecommuting growth.***

- The 2004 survey also showed that an additional 18% of commuters who do not telecommute today “could and would” telecommute if given the opportunity. About two-thirds of these interested respondents said they would like to telecommute “regularly,” while one-third would like to telecommute “occasionally.”

***Telecommuting in the Washington area is concentrated in certain demographic and employment groups.***

- Telecommuters were statistically more likely to be male, to be of white ethnic background, to commute distances of more than 30 miles and have incomes greater than \$60,000.

***“Informal” telecommuting arrangements predominate in the Washington area, but formal programs have increased since 2001.***

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<sup>3</sup> 2004 State of the Commute Survey Results from the Washington Metropolitan Region, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, June 2005

***95% of Washington area telecommuters telecommute from home, not a satellite office provided by an employer, a telework center, or both home and another location.***

***The average frequency of telecommuting in the Washington area seems to have increased slightly from 2001, from 1.2 days in 2001 to 1.3 days per week.***

Additionally, DRPT will continue to participate in and assist several legislative advisory committees including the Joint Commission on Technology and Science (JCOTS) Telework and Telecommuting Advisory Committee, the HJR144 (Telework Opportunities for State and Private Sector Employees) and the Council on Technology Services Mobile Workforce Workgroup. DRPT will also work closely with the newly created Office of Telework Promotion and Broadband Assistance.