

Kentucky's Governor Encourages 4-Day Weeks To Save Gas Costs

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The governor is looking to cut commuting costs for Kentucky state employees by encouraging them to car pool and work four-day weeks when possible.

Gov. Steve Beshear, who often travels Kentucky in a gas-guzzling SUV, said Tuesday the moves also are aimed at easing traffic and demand on gasoline, which has risen to \$4 per gallon across the state.

“Companies across the state are examining options to save their employees money and to reduce their impact on the environment,” he said. “Here we have found two initiatives that are both creative and cost effective.”

Beshear, a Democrat, said allowing employees to work four longer days rather than five eight-hour days should reduce their commuting costs by about 20 percent.

“Families across Kentucky are looking for relief,” Beshear said. “We must be responsive and we must be innovative.”

Administration officials have set up a Web site for state employees aimed at hooking up prospective car poolers to share commuting expenses. Managers in various state offices are also being encouraged to take advantage of an existing regulation that allows people to telecommute or work flexible schedules, Beshear said.

Telecommuting has gained traction year by year with advances in video conferencing, instant messaging and other communications technologies. Employers typically adopt it as a way to save money, boost morale and retain workers.

State offices will not see a drop in their hours of operation and not all employees will be able to move to a four-day week, Beshear said.

Less than 2 percent of the state’s 34,400 employees have taken advantage of the option to work four-day weeks, said Tim Longmeyer, deputy secretary of the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet. That number is expected to increase substantially, Longmeyer said.

Employees have been allowed to work flexible schedules for approximately seven years, and fewer than 500 have so far taken advantage, Longmeyer said. But that’s likely to increase because it wasn’t a priority for past administrations, said Beshear, who was elected last year.

Dozens of people on the governor's staff and about 56 percent of executive branch employees — about 6,000 people, live outside of Frankfort, Beshear said.

Millie Howard-Metcalf, a state employee from Louisville, has spent months trying to find someone to share her approximately 95-mile round trip to work each day. She posted a flier earlier this year, but has yet to find a permanent partner to car pool with, Howard-Metcalf said.

“I think it's great,” Howard-Metcalf said of Beshear's plan. “It'll really help save a lot of money for a lot of state workers.”