**Environmental Issues Committee Meeting Minutes**

November 21, 2014, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Umpqua Room, EMU

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Erin Moore—Architecture (Chair)

Shabnam Akhtari—Math

Brian Gillis—Art

Holly Lynn—Biology

Marie Swarrigim—Campus Planning, Design, and Construction

Student:

Erin Walker, Student Sustainability Coalition Board

Ex-Officio

Eric Beeler—Student Sustainability Coalition   
Steve Mital—Office of Sustainability

Christine Thompson – Campus Planning, Design, and Construction

Blair Hinton - Athletics

Other Attendees

Laurie Jacoby – Travel Office

Connie Isaacs - Travel Office

Brett Giles – Business Affairs Office

Jill Ritz – Business Affairs Office

Rob Freytag – Business Affairs Office

Sonya Carlson—Office of Sustainability

**WELCOME AND MINUTES**

Erin welcomed the committee, and committee members and guests introduced themselves. Brian Gillis moved to approve the June and October minutes and Holly seconded the motion. By a voice vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

**BUSINESS TRAVEL TAX**

Erin introduced the proposal by Frank Stahl to tax business travel. As business travel is a significant portion of UO’s carbon footprint, the proposal’s goal would be to reduce travel and/or offset the impact by using funds raised to implement other green house gas mitigating projects. Steve passed around the Sankey diagram to show why there was interest in mitigating airplane travel (as it is such a large portion of the campus emissions).

At the previous meeting, EIC members wanted more information about how much this project would cost per trip, so Steve did some research. He reported that the market rate for a carbon offset is about $4 a metric ton. However, the real cost or the rate needed to actually curb behavior and pay for the long-term costs of emissions is greater. Academics and economists estimate that cost to range from $30 to $180 a ton. This proposal focuses on $30 a ton as the baseline and is also the rate implemented in British Columbia and being considered by the Oregon State Legislature.

To give a sense of what that translates to in terms of real dollars, Steve estimated the emissions for two popular UO trips. The first flight, Eugene to Washington, DC (4,700 miles round trip), without radiative forcing produces about 1 metric ton, but with radiative forcing has an impact of about 2.5 metric tons. Radiative forcing essentially accounts for the fact that the release of emissions higher in the atmosphere has a greater impact. This means that for a $400 to $500 flight this proposal would add a cost of about $30 to $75. The second flight, Eugene to San Francisco, would cost an additional $6 (without radiative forcing) to $22 (with radiative forcing).

Laurie Jacoby then discussed numerous topics:

1. Some conferences have voluntary carbon offsets that can be purchased, but the Business Affairs Office does not currently have the authority to reimburse for this cost when it is voluntary. This could be changed with a policy change.
2. They believe that the easiest way to collect the tax would be more behind the scenes as a bulk fee.
3. Airfare travel is purchased through four main methods (Rough Total for Airline Travel for 2013 – $9.9 Million):
   1. Contracted through travel agency ($7 million)
      1. Can get data on mileage and how many stops
   2. Department card purchase (P-Card) (400,000)
      1. Currently only track cost, not mileage or stops and is more difficult to get users to report the breakdown for mileage
   3. Personal reimbursements ($2 to $3 Million)
      1. Currently only track cost, not mileage or stops, but that could be modified to track the needed information
   4. Paid through UO Foundation Funds
      1. Can’t track or tax
4. Other Facts Presented:
   1. Last year the UO spent roughly $20 million on business travel, which includes transportation, meals, and hotels. Flights can be broken out if purchased by the travel agency. About $6 to $7 million last year was purchased through the University credit card directly to the travel agency.

Then discussed methods to implement the proposal and related challenges and benefits:

1. Methods:
   1. Staff report travel costs more specifically when purchased and charge based on that new data generated like the system already established for gas mileage reimbursements
   2. Charge a fee based on each transaction
      1. Basing the fee on cost doesn’t necessarily accurately track emissions impact due to other factors that affect cost such as multiple stops, first class travel, and time when purchased.
      2. More consistent in terms of staff ability to report and manage.
   3. Charge a flat fee per flight
      1. Not as accurate, but has less administrative costs.
   4. Charge a fee based on region
      1. Not as accurate, but has less administrative costs
   5. Monthly or quarterly charge based on an average of travel costs
      1. Easier to implement, but may not be as accurate and may not curb behavior
   6. Create a separate database for mileage instead of pulling information from financial database

Global Challenges Regardless of the Method Chosen:

1. Campus systems would have to be modified and the office travel coordinators would have to be trained on the new system, but there are monthly meetings and trainings where this information could be disseminated.

1. Grants may not allow for this charge.
2. Gathering information on when a travel purchase has been made and the associated distance.
3. Travel is generally reported as a lump sum and tracked through three accounting codes for in-state, out-of-state, and international, so new account codes would need to be established and the Business Affairs Office has authority over creation of those account codes (but this doesn’t tell you mileage only total cost).
4. Upfront set up may have some challenges but once the system is in place it would just become a standard part of procedure and would run smoothly.

Other Issues Discussed:

1. Discussed that this came from a faculty member and discussed that further review with affected departments would be needed.
   1. Top ten departments affected:
      1. Athletics
      2. College of Arts and Sciences
      3. Office for Research and Innovation
      4. Library
      5. College of Education
      6. Lundquist College of Business
      7. Law School
      8. School of Music and Dance
      9. International Affairs
      10. University Advancement
2. There are other systems in place across campus that represent self taxing such as when new buildings are built, but input from major players affected would need to be garnered.
3. How the funds raised would be managed, who would determine how they are allocated. Answer: That isn’t solidified yet, they have some ideas based on how the proposal is written. In short, there is a revolving loan fund where these funds could be directed. That fund is managed by campus operations as they are best positioned to identify which energy efficiency opportunities exist in the built environment on campus.

**COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (CEP)**

Steve summarized the history of the CEP including the delays that have occurred as a result of the creation of the Policy Library procedures, high turnover in the President’s office, and evolving faculty senate review process. The 7 Guiding Principles that have been adopted, are being reviewed by the Office of Sustainability and will eventually result in actionable plans from within relevant departments. As this project progresses the EIC will have review and provide guidance as needed.