



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: Councilmember Donald Rocha
SUBJECT: COUNCIL TRAVEL
DATE: April 16, 2018

Approved

Don Rocha

Date

4-16-18

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RECOMMENDATION

Defer consideration of the Mayor's memo and direct staff to return to Council with the following analysis:

1. A list of all trips each sitting member of the Council or their staff have taken during their service in elected office in San Jose. For each trip, staff should include the following information:
 - a. The destination of the trip and basic information about its purpose (to attend a conference or lobby Federal lawmakers, for example.)
 - b. The cost of the trip and an indication as to whether it was paid for by City funds or outside funds. In instances where outside funding was accepted, staff should indicate who provided the funding.
2. A review of the number of excused or unexcused absences due to official travel that each sitting member of the Council has accrued during their time in elected office in San Jose. Absences from council meetings and committee meetings should both be counted, and absences from council meetings should include absence from closed session. The absences should be broken down by year to give a sense of trends over time.

ANALYSIS

The Mayor has proposed amendments to the Travel Policy that would give him increased control over who attends Sister City trips. Before we consider these amendments, I believe we should ask staff to bring forward analysis that helps us better understand the problem we're trying to solve. The Mayor focuses on Sister City trips, but members of the council and their staff engage in many other types of official travel besides visiting Sister Cities. If we're going to make changes to the Travel Policy, we should have a full picture of Council travel before acting.

In Recommendation 1, I propose that we ask staff to bring forward a list of all trips taken by current members of the Council and their staff, to help us determine how frequently we travel and how much it costs the City. It would also be useful to review which outside groups have funded Council travel. In Recommendation 2, I propose that we review how many absences due to travel members of the Council have accrued during their time in office, to determine whether travel is getting in the way of the Council's business.

I'll close by noting that I have rarely undertaken official travel during my time on the Council. I appreciate, however, that my colleagues may make decisions about travel that are different from my own, and that I should not seek to impose my own preferences on everyone else. We were all elected to use our own judgement in the pursuit of our public duties and are all accountable to the voters for our decisions. It's appropriate for the Council to establish policies to ensure that decisions about travel are transparent and accountable, but I don't think we should enact policies that allow one member of the Council to manage or direct how other members of the Council do their jobs.