



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, May 20, 2016

CPM 2016-06

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS

FROM: BETH F. COBERT, ACTING DIRECTOR

Subject: Impact of the Metro SafeTrack Project on Washington, DC, Area Federal Employees

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has announced it will implement a SafeTrack maintenance plan to address safety recommendations and rehabilitate the Metrorail system to improve safety and reliability. WMATA's plan will include continuous single tracking on certain segments of the rail system for several weeks, as well as shutting down segments entirely for up to several weeks. This will be in addition to intensive weeknight and weekend track work, which will include the closure of the system at midnight on weekends. The SafeTrack project will not only impact employees who regularly use the Metrorail system but could potentially cause a cascading effect on all commuters in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. For more information on WMATA's scheduled maintenance plan, see <https://www.wmata.com/service/track-work.cfm>.

Given the scope, duration, and nature of the disruptions, the impact to agencies in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area will vary. That means, instead of imposing a single approach for the entire Federal Government, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will provide guidance to agencies on how to utilize various workplace flexibilities. Ultimately, individual agencies are best positioned to determine the impact that the SafeTrack project will have on their workforce and therefore agencies should make decisions regarding how to adjust. OPM will provide additional guidance and assistance to agencies to better understand the tools available to them.

OPM has established an interagency working group, through the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, to assess the potential impact on Federal employees and agency operations in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. The responsibility of this group is to discuss agency concerns, develop options, and share agency best practices for maintaining productivity and continuity of operations during this project. OPM is in the process of consulting with our interagency working group and will issue additional guidance and examples of how to effectively use workplace flexibilities (e.g., telework, alternative work schedules, and leave) to help reduce the impact of the SafeTrack project on their employees and overall agency operations. In addition, OPM is communicating with national labor unions and other employee

groups and seek their suggestions and feedback, which will help inform us as we develop and update any OPM guidance.

Agencies should review their policies and procedures on the use of workplace flexibilities during the SafeTrack project to help mitigate commuting disruptions. Employees should also plan on altering their commuting patterns if needed to fulfill their responsibilities. Agencies should carefully review their current telework arrangements, determine whether employees are eligible to telework, renew telework agreements older than one year, and establish written agreements with interested employees who are eligible to telework. This may provide an opportunity for agencies to review and reassess their telework eligibility criteria to determine if changes are needed to their existing programs.

Similarly, agencies should review their policies for alternative work schedules. Since the SafeTrack project will occur over an extended period and will affect agencies differently, OPM does not anticipate the need for the widespread use of excused absence, and agencies are reminded that any excused absence provided should not be for an extended or indefinite period or on a recurring basis.

Additionally, OPM urges agencies to take steps, to the extent possible, to accurately monitor and track the use of telework and other workplace flexibilities during the SafeTrack project. Agencies are reminded that tracking efforts should align with current OPM requirements for telework reporting outlined at www.opm.gov/feddata/GDS/GDS_B03.pdf. (See pages B188-B189 and B202-203.)

Agencies should immediately begin working with their supervisors, employees, and union representatives to discuss the use of workplace flexibilities and policies for the use of annual leave, leave without pay, previously earned compensatory time off, and/or earned credit hours under a flexible work schedule to alleviate the impact.

As we move forward, OPM will provide updates, guidance, frequently asked questions and workplace flexibility examples concerning the SafeTrack project, along with agency best practices. OPM advises agencies to continue monitoring OPM's website for further information and guidance in the coming weeks.

Additional Information

Agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact OPM at pay-leave-policy@opm.gov. Employees must contact their agency human resources office for further information on this memo. For additional information on work scheduling flexibilities, please visit our website – <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/work-schedules/>. For information on telework, please visit – <https://www.telework.gov/>.

cc: Human Resources Directors