Frequently Asked Questions About Vanpooling

What is vanpooling?

Vanpooling is generally seven to 15 people who commute together in a van on a regular basis. One person usually leases, drives and maintains the van while the riders pay a monthly fare. Most vans are obtained through a vanpool leasing company by one member of the vanpool group.

What are the benefits of vanpooling?

Not only can you save money on gas and other commuting costs, you may also save time by traveling in a carpool lane. Riders can read, rest or enjoy the scenery. Some riders like to share the driving responsibilities. The person that leases the van and fills the seats with other commuters, generally collects fees from the riders to total the monthly lease payment, fuel and other fees. That person also has use of the van during weekends, performs general maintenance duties and enjoys a certain number of free personal miles.

Is vanpooling the right choice for me?

Do you commute a long distance (at least 15 miles one way)? Do you work Monday through Friday? Are your hours consistent—or do they have the potential to be? If so, you may be an ideal candidate for vanpooling.

How much does it cost?

Riders pay a monthly fare based on the cost of the vanpool commute. Fares vary depending on the type of van leased, commute distance, number of riders, fuel costs and other operating expenses. Contact one of the vanpool leasing companies in your area to find out the cost for a van best suited for your commute and to learn about special subsidy programs.

Is there a tax benefit for commuting by vanpool?

Employees can purchase vanpool fare vouchers through the payroll deduction process using pre-tax dollars. This reduces your taxable income by up to $130 per month so that you may pay lower income taxes.

Will a vanpool pick me up at home?

To reduce the number of pick-ups and drop-offs, ensuring that everyone gets to work and home quickly, most vanpoolers choose to meet at Park & Ride lots or other agreed-upon locations along the way. Many Park & Ride lots are designated by signs on freeways and streets—you've probably passed them many times in your travels. Most Park & Ride lots are free, although occasionally permits or fees may be required.

What if I'm sick or go on vacation? Do I still have to pay for my seat?

Your monthly fare reserves your seat whether you use it or not. If you'll be gone for an extended period of time, most vanpools allow you to temporarily "sublet" your seat to another rider. Remember, even if you miss a day here or there, vanpooling is still a bargain compared to driving alone.

What if I'm late or someone else keeps us waiting?

Most vanpool groups set a standard waiting period, such as five to seven minutes, for the van to wait at a designated stop.

What if I need to leave work early or stay late or if I am stranded at work without a ride home on a day that I vanpool?

A Guaranteed Ride Home program is available for rideshare participants so that they can get a free taxi ride home or to their vehicle under certain emergency situations.