

## **VANPOOL PROGRAM FEATURES**

### ***What is a vanpool?***

A vanpool is a group of 7 to 15 commuters who voluntarily participate in a ridesharing arrangement. The van must make just one trip to work, and one trip home and 80% or more of the total vehicle miles must be used for commuting purposes. The group shares in the cost of operating the van.

### ***Who drives the van?***

In a commuter vanpool, the driver is one of the members of the commuter group! There is a vanpool coordinator who takes responsibility for the vanpool, makes arrangements to have the vehicle serviced, and collects the monthly fares from the other participants in the group. Often, the vanpool coordinator is also the primary driver however, alternate/back-up drivers will also be approved to ensure there is always an authorized driver available.

### ***What are the primary driver's responsibilities?***

Drivers must provide a safe, dependable commute by driving defensively. They pick-up and drop-off passengers according to the schedule set by the group, insist that everyone wear their seatbelt, clean the van on a regular basis, collect passenger fares and pay the monthly vanpool service fee. They also work with the local VPSI representative to arrange for maintenance and repair and must follow the terms and conditions of the Volunteer Driver Agreement.

### ***What are the passengers' responsibilities?***

Each person should be at the pick-up point on time, make their monthly payments on time, discuss and agree on rules for the van, provide 30 days' notice of their intention to leave the group, and wear their seatbelts. Three or four passengers will also need to be approved as alternate drivers to fill in for the primary driver when he/she is ill or on vacation. All participants should work with the vanpool coordinator to help recruit passengers to maintain a full van. This will keep the cost as low as possible for everyone.

### ***Why should I vanpool?***

Vanpooling is one of the most economical means of transportation available in The United States. It costs much less than driving alone to and from work, it reduces the number of cars on our roadways, it saves thousands of gallons of fuel and drastically reduces air pollution on an annual basis.

### ***How much does it cost to vanpool?***

The style vehicle and the monthly mileage allowance selected determine VPSI's monthly service charge. The vanpool coordinator adds to that the cost of fuel, parking, tolls and incidentals and divides the total monthly operating cost equally by the number of passengers. Therefore, monthly passenger fares can vary. The cost to vanpool is often comparable to what you pay for just gasoline. When you consider the wear and tear, maintenance, tires and the entire incidental costs associates with driving alone, vanpooling is very economical.

### ***What types of vehicles are used?***

VPSI offers factory and custom conversion vehicles with a variety of features to suit your needs and budget. All commuter vans have cloth seats, carpeting, and front & rear air conditioning and heating. Our conversion vehicles also have individual reading lights and a modified floor plan for easier exit/entry to the rear seats.

### ***How is vehicle maintenance handled?***

Each vanpool van is delivered with a preventive maintenance coupon booklet. Appointments for service are arranged through the local customer service representative at a vendor location convenient to the vanpool coordinator. The vendor performs the work requested, removes the appropriate coupon and invoices VPSI for the service/repair. A back-up vehicle will be provided for longer repairs, and 24-hour roadside assistance is provided.

### ***What type of insurance coverage is provided?***

Vanpools are covered by a \$1,000,000 automobile liability policy with zero deductible coverage as part of the standard program. Collision and comprehensive damage coverage for the vanpool vehicle is provided and also has no deductible. Each van will be delivered with an insurance packet containing the current insurance identification card, an accident procedure form and an accident claim form. The VPSI representative will work with you to have your vehicle repaired in the event of an accident.

### ***How is customer billing handled?***

The vanpool coordinator will receive an invoice toward the end of each month for the next month's vanpool service fee. He/she will add to that the anticipated fuel, parking and miscellaneous costs to determine the total operating expenses for the month and divide the total by the number of passengers in the van. The coordinator collects the passenger fees on or before the first of the month and remits the vanpool service charge to VPSI.

By paying the monthly passenger fare you are guaranteed a seat on the vanpool for the month. Because the operating costs are constant, refunds cannot be issued for days that you do not ride. If you anticipate being away from the van for a considerable length of time, you may wish to "sell" your seat to another rider. Just make sure to clear it with your vanpool coordinator first. The best way to keep passenger fares low is to keep the van full, so be sure to ask friends and co-workers if they are interested in joining your vanpool group.

### ***What else should I know?***

**The Emergency Ride Home Program.** CommuteSmart Commuter Services also includes an Emergency Ride Home Program to help get you home in the event of an emergency. You have made the wise choice to leave your car at home and we want you to feel comfortable having made that decision. The Emergency Ride Home Program will provide you with the confidence you need to continue vanpooling.

**Tax Advantages to Vanpooling.** The IRS enables employers to provide up to \$120.00 per month per employee toward the cost of vanpooling or riding mass transit (bus, train, rail). This benefit is tax-free to the employee and tax deductible as a business expense to the employer. To assist companies with the implementation of a tax-free vanpool benefit, we offer CommuterBuck Vouchers. Employers can purchase CommuterBucks in the denominations and quantity they need for their employees who vanpool. Employees remit the voucher as part of their vanpool payments to their vanpool coordinator.

**Reducing Air Pollution.** You may not realize it, but the *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) has listed Birmingham as one of the cities with the dirtiest air in America. A leading contributor to bad air quality or "smog" is auto emissions. And, unfortunately, Birmingham ranks second in the nation in vehicle miles traveled per day! Only folks in Atlanta drive more than we do! While everyone cannot be expected to give up his or her car, if you are commuting to a heavily congested area, there is a good chance that someone else from your neighborhood is doing the same thing. We all need to do our part to reduce Single Occupant Vehicle (SOV) traffic and reduce air pollution. Birmingham is a beautiful city, and we want to do everything we can to make sure it stays that way!

**For more information about CommuteSmart call 264-8462 or 1-87-RIDEMATCH or visit us on the web at [www.commutesmart.org](http://www.commutesmart.org)**

---

<sup>i</sup> CommuteSmart's Vanpool Program is a service of VPSI, Inc. which is supported by funding from the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. The program is intended to reduce single occupant commute trips in and around Birmingham. This information is provided as a guide and may be appended, modified, or changed at any time without notice. 3/07