

Vanpool Frequently Asked Questions

What is a vanpool?

A vanpool is generally a group of 7 to 15 people with similar travel patterns who ride to work or other places together in a shared vehicle (most often a van).

What's the benefit to me to vanpool?

The money savings from vanpooling are often substantial when compared to commuting alone, and you will also lessen the stress of driving to work everyday. Vanpooling gives you the chance to snooze during your commute or catch up on reading. By vanpooling, you play an important part in helping ease traffic congestion, cutting fuel consumption, and reducing air pollution and global warming. Ridesharing is also a great way to network professionally and share business ideas and opportunities. Driving with company can make trip a more pleasant and enjoyable experience.

What is the RTC VANPOOL program?

RTC VANPOOL is offered through a partnership of the RTC and VPSI. VPSI provides the vehicles and pays for their insurance and maintenance. Vanpool participants share the costs of gas and the van lease. To encourage vanpooling, the RTC offers a subsidy to lower participants' commuting expenses. In order to be eligible for the RTC subsidy, vanpools must register for the program, have an origin or destination within Washoe County, and maintain and report ridership data.

How much is the RTC VANPOOL subsidy?

The RTC provides a substantial subsidy for each vanpool—equivalent to up to 40% of the monthly van lease including tax. The subsidy is paid directly to VPSI and credited to the vanpool's account where it is applied to operating expenses.

What are the vehicles like?

The vehicles in the RTC VANPOOL program are provided by VPSI. They are usually 8 to 15-passenger vans that are designed for commuting. Some have bench seats; others have individual reclining captain's chairs. For more information, contact VPSI at 1-800-VAN-RIDE (1-800-826-7433) www.VPSIinc.com.

What are the driver's basic responsibilities?

Drivers pick up and deliver the passengers, and arrange for van maintenance. (The RTC's vanpool provider, VPSI, pays for maintenance charges along with the vehicle's insurance.) The van is usually housed at the primary driver's residence at night and can be used for personal use up to approximately 200 miles per month.

Can anybody drive the van?

The main driver and alternate drivers must be approved by the RTC's vanpool provider, VPSI. All drivers must be at least 25 years old, in reasonable health, with good driving records. No special licenses are required. For more information, contact VPSI at 1-800-VAN-RIDE (1-800-826-7433) www.VPSIinc.com.

What are the vanpool members' responsibilities?

Each vanpool group needs a primary driver; at least one back-up driver (preferably two); someone who will lease the vehicle and collect the passenger payments; and someone who will be the vanpool coordinator (maintain ridership records in order to be eligible for a subsidy from the RTC). Often,

one person has more than one role. For example, it is common for the primary driver to also lease the van and act as vanpool coordinator. Primary drivers, particularly when they perform other duties, sometimes commute free (with the lease payment divided between the other vanpool participants) or pay a smaller portion of the van lease.

What is my commitment if I lease a van?

Leasing a van is more like a month to month rental agreement than a traditional car lease. You will be required to pay a monthly lease, but money is collected from the other vanpool participants, so you do not pay all of the money out of your own pocket.

Once I join a vanpool, what is my commitment?

Vanpools operate on a month to month basis and require a month's payment in advance. Passengers need to give the driver and/or vanpool coordinator adequate notice before withdrawing from a vanpool.

What happens when the driver is ill? Or passengers? And what about vacations?

Each vanpool is created with back-up drivers for such times.

What will it cost?

Exact costs will vary with each vanpool based on the amount of the van lease and the gas that is used, and how many participants there are in the vanpool. Lease prices are based on the size of the vehicle and the miles it will be driven each month. The RTC provides a substantial subsidy for each vanpool, equivalent to up to 40% of the monthly van lease including tax. The subsidy is paid directly to VPSI and credited to the vanpool's account where it is applied to operating expenses.

Could my fare change?

Changes in the price of gasoline could change your fare. Ridership also affects vanpool fares. The more passengers there are, the lower the cost. VPSI will offer temporary seat subsidy assistance to groups that find themselves suddenly down several riders.

What are some ways to organize picking up and dropping off people on vanpool days?

There are a number of different ways to manage the logistics. If vanpool members live close to each other, the driver can simply come by each person's house to pick them up. If that's not feasible, then vanpoolers can meet at one of the member's houses or a centrally located public place. Keep in mind that there are also some park-and-ride lots throughout the region that can serve as a meeting location. On the other end of the trip, there can be multiple stops or one centrally located spot for dropping people off.

How can I form a vanpool?

Register with RTC RIDESHARE at www.rtcwashoe.greenride.com. From there, you'll be guided through the ridematch process. Select names on your matchlist and send them an email letting them know that you are interested in forming a vanpool. You can also contact your human resources department at work and ask them to help promote ridesharing. Once you have a group of four people with similar commute patterns interested in forming a vanpool, notify the RTC (335-1920) and your prospective vanpool route will be posted on the RTC RIDESHARE website. This may accelerate you finding the other participants necessary to form a vanpool. **If you already have a group of seven or more participants, call 335-1920 to get your vanpool started.**

What are good vanpooling tips?

- ✓ **Sign up for Guaranteed Ride Home.** If you vanpooled to work and something unexpected comes up that prevents you from being able to vanpool home, RTC will pay for your taxi ride home. Create a rideshare account on the RTC RIDESHARE website www.rtcwashoe.greenride.com and click on the Guaranteed Ride Home icon on “My Page” for more information.
- ✓ **Take care of the van.** Passengers should dispose of newspapers, coffee cups and anything else they brought. Drivers must take the van in for maintenance, keep usage logs and fill the van with gas.
- ✓ **Establish some rules.** Each vanpool member should have a chance to express his/her needs and concerns. Vanpoolers should agree upon certain ground rules at the outset such as:
 - Food, coffee, smoking and perfume/cologne usage.
 - Radio choices.
 - How long drivers will wait for tardy passengers.
 - Who is notified if someone is sick or unable to vanpool on a given trip? How are they contacted?
 - Driving safely.
 - Please encourage everyone to use seatbelts for their safety and the safety of others.
 - While you should not be a “backseat driver,” you should immediately address any concerns about a driver’s driving practices.
- ✓ **Follow good vanpool etiquette**

Every vanpool is unique, but good etiquette is essential to keep it running smoothly. Good etiquette takes into account communication, courtesy, and the safety of everyone in the vanpool.

Do:

- Communicate with your fellow vanpoolers. If you’re running a few minutes late, call them and let them know, but don’t let it become a habit. If you can’t vanpool on a particular day due to a schedule conflict, give your vanpool partners ample notice so they can make other arrangements.
- Drive safely at all times.
- Keep your vehicle clean and in good condition.
- Respect any rules the vanpool has agreed, such as restrictions on smoking, eating, or drinking.

Don’t

- Make a habit of being late.
- Ask your vanpoolers to make extra stops along the way so you can take care of personal errands.
- Bring up controversial topics such as religion or politics unless you know your vanpoolers very well. While some people may enjoy discussing or even debating the issues, others may prefer a quieter commute.
- Have lengthy cell phone conversations while you’re in the vanpool.