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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS

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IS VANPOOLING YOUR BAG?

The Department of Transportation (DOT) in cooperation with the Employees Recreation Association has studied the operational and financial aspects of vanpools to determine whether vanpooling might offer an advantageous means of commuting to work for some DOT employees. The purpose of this issue of Southwest Seventh is to discuss the important features of vanpooling - cost and other considerations - and to determine the interest among DOT employees. A task group is now available to assist DOT employees in forming vanpools.

Who Is For Vanpooling? (and vice versa)

Vanpooling will generally be most attractive to people who commute by automobile. Vanpooling is obviously cheaper and more energy efficient than driving alone. Vanpooling can also be more economical, and more energy efficient than carpooling because of the larger number of riders per vehicle.

Determining the cheapest mode among carpools, vanpools, and buses depends on a number of factors. In general, vanpooling is more advantageous only for longer trips (at least 10 miles one-way).

Vanpools are not intended to compete with Metro service. Rather, they appear at best advantage in serving the more distant areas - outside the Capital Beltway - that are not conveniently served by public transit.

Furthermore, vanpools must be run as nonprofit operations on a membership basis. Otherwise, vanpools could require certification as common carriers.

Who Pays and How Much?

Experience indicates that the total cost of operating a vanpool (including loan payments, fuel, maintenance, insurance, licenses, etc.) can be met by having each member pay a relatively moderate charge on a monthly, weekly, or other basis. With more riders, the cost for each individual would be lower. The table below indicates the approximate charges for a vanpool operating on a break-even basis:

Monthly Rider Charge

No. of Riders	Daily Roundtrip Miles				
	20	40	60	80	100
8	39.50	45.50	52.00	58.00	64.50
10	31.50	36.50	41.50	46.50	51.50
12	27.50	31.50	35.50	40.50	44.00
14	23.50	27.00	30.50	34.50	38.00

Generally, as an incentive toward providing the service and keeping the records, the driver does not pay the monthly fee, but does pay the operating costs for personal use of the van. All of the financial arrangements, operating rules, and schedule are decided in advance by the driver-owner and the vanpool members.

DOT Assistance

By providing the information on the attached questionnaire, interested DOT employees will enable the vanpool task group to assist individuals in identifying potential vanpools. The task group can also provide information on rules and procedures that have been adopted in successful vanpool operations elsewhere, plus some representative cost figures on vans and their operation. One source for financing the purchase of a van for vanpooling would be the Transportation Federal Credit Union which can provide 100 percent new-car loans to qualified applicants.

Vanpools are eligible for parking permits for DOT controlled space on the same basis as carpools under DOT Order 1700.19B. They are therefore virtually guaranteed immediate issuance of a parking permit based on their larger numbers of riders.

It's Your Move

If you believe that vanpooling may be advantageous to you, or you would like to learn more about it, please fill out the attached questionnaire and return it by June 15 to Vanpool, HHP-26. On the survey form be sure to indicate your interest in participating as a:

Driver and van owner - buys the van and coordinates the vanpool operation.

Rider - rides daily for a fixed monthly, weekly, or other fee.

Back-up driver - rides daily but drives the van occasionally when the normal driver is not available.

If you have any questions or would like additional information please call Steve Baluch, extension 60210.

DOT VANPOOL PROGRAM

