



Got a question? We've got an answer!

Bay Area Vanpool is a program offered by the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA), serving the West Central Florida counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando and Citrus. TBARTA is dedicated to reducing traffic congestion and air pollution by encouraging the use of various commute options other than driving alone.

VPSI, Inc. is the administrator of Bay Area Vanpool and provides vanpool vehicles, vehicle insurance, scheduled preventative maintenance and repair programs, customer billing, and customer support for the vanpool groups as well as other functions.

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

A vanpool is a group of 5 to 15 commuters who voluntarily participate in a ridesharing arrangement. The van must make just one trip to work, and one trip home. A variety of vehicles ranging from 7 passenger minivans to full-size 15 passenger vans are available for your choosing. The monthly vanpool rate is determined by the total commute miles that the van will travel during the month. The vanpool group shares the cost of the monthly rate plus sales tax (where applicable), fuel, tolls and any other commute related expenses that may be incurred.

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

In a commuter vanpool, the Primary Driver is one of the members of the commuting group and is the primary point of contact for the vanpool. He/she makes arrangements to have the vehicle serviced as required, collects the monthly fares from the other participants in the group and maintains a roster of potential riders who are contacted when space comes available. Most groups will also need two to three authorized Alternate Drivers to rotate driving responsibilities among themselves and the Primary Driver. **The volunteer drivers must not receive any compensation and driving must be incidental to their commute.**

### ***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, ensure that everyone wears their seatbelt, maintain a clean van, collect passenger fares and forward payment of the monthly vanpool invoice to VPSI. They also arrange for vehicle maintenance and repairs and must follow the terms and conditions of their Volunteer Driver Agreement.

## ***How are drivers approved?***

Drivers must submit a Volunteer Driver Application, along with other forms, for authorization by VPSI in order to drive. The applicant's driving history is reviewed before being approved by VPSI, in writing, to drive. In general, a driver applicant must be at least 25 years old, have five (5) years of uninterrupted, active, licensed driving experience, and a good driving record. **All drivers must be approved in writing by VPSI prior to getting behind the wheel.** Applications and qualifications are available by calling Bay Area Vanpool at 1-800-998-RIDE.

## ***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, and wear their seatbelts at all times. Each vanpool must maintain a minimum of one approved Alternate Driver. Alternate drivers either rotate the driving, or fill in for the Primary Driver when he/she is ill or on vacation. All participants should work with the Primary Driver 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. For the individual commuter, it also saves wear and tear on their personal car and reduces the stress associated with a long, hectic commute.

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

The style of vehicle and the monthly mileage allowance selected determine the monthly vanpool rate. The monthly vanpool rate is determined by the total commute miles that the van will travel during the month. The vanpool group shares the cost of the monthly rate plus sales tax, fuel, tolls and any other commute related expenses that may be incurred. Therefore, monthly passenger fares can vary but are very affordable. The cost to vanpool may even be less than what you pay for just gasoline alone! When you consider the cost of wear and tear, maintenance, tires and all incidental costs associated with driving alone, vanpooling can be very economical.

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

A variety of factory and custom conversion vehicles are available to suit your needs and your budget. Almost all vans have cloth seats, carpeting, and front & rear air conditioning and heating. The 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 on a scheduled maintenance program and is delivered with a scheduled preventive maintenance coupon booklet. Appointments for service are arranged through VPSI's national account vendor network, such as Goodyear, Firestone and more. The vendor follows the instructions on each scheduled maintenance coupon describing the work to be performed and then bills VPSI through their national account billing system. Many national account vendors are

independently owned and operated so be sure to confirm the stores ability to process national account billing prior to taking your vehicle in for service.

### ***Is insurance included?***

Yes. The insurance for the van includes a \$1,000,000.00 automobile liability policy with a “zero” deductible for approved drivers! Auto liability coverage protects authorized drivers from claims filed against him/her. Full collision and comprehensive damage coverage is also provided. Each van will be delivered with an insurance packet containing the current insurance identification card, an accident procedure form and directions for filing accident reports 24/7 to the appropriate insurance claims representatives.

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

Invoices are generated on or about the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and the vanpool Primary Driver should receive the invoice by the third week of the month for the next month’s vanpool service. He/she will add any additional operating costs to determine the total operating expenses for the month and divide the total by the number of participants in the group. The Primary Driver collects the passenger fees on or before the first of the month and remits payment to VPSI, the administrator of the vanpool program.

By paying the monthly passenger fare your seat on the vanpool is reserved for the month. There are no refunds for days you do not ride. The best way to keep passenger fares low is to keep the van full, so be sure to spread the word about vanpooling. Ask friends and co-workers if they are interested in joining your vanpool group.

### ***How do I get started?***

If you think vanpooling would be for you, it’s easy to get started. First, get a group of co-workers together that want to participate with you (Bay Area Vanpool can provide materials to help you recruit members). Second, decide who will be the Primary Driver/Coordinator. Lastly, call Bay Area Vanpool at 1-800-998-RIDE to get the process started. We will be happy to provide you with details on vanpooling and estimate your monthly expenses. It’s that easy!

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

**Emergency Ride Home Program (ERH):** TBARTA offers the Emergency Ride Home Program to help get you home in the event of illness or family emergency while at work or having to work late unexpectedly. The Emergency Ride Home Program will provide you with up to eight (8) FREE taxi rides home from work per calendar year. Certain restrictions apply so please contact **TBARTA at 1-800-998-RIDE** to learn about ERH.

**Tax Advantages to Vanpooling:** The Internal Revenue Code (IRC), Section 132 (f) enables most employers to provide a commute benefit for employees that is applied toward the cost of vanpooling or riding mass transit (bus, train, and 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, employers can purchase CommuterBucks from VPSI in the denominations and quantities they need for their employees who vanpool. Employees remit their voucher as part of their vanpool payment to their vanpool Primary Driver. To get more information about this IRS provision, contact TBARTA at 800-998-RIDE.

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