

Carpooling

In a Nutshell

Carpooling, also known as ride-sharing and car-sharing, is the act of sharing a vehicle so that more than one person travels in the vehicle at a particular time. Carpooling reduces air pollution, energy use, toll expenses, and stresses of driving. Vehicular wear and tear can also be reduced, since the car will not be traveling as much as it would if the driver did not carpool.

The “How To”

Carpool Basics

The most common way carpooling begins is through shared activities or experiences. Coworkers who live close to one another and friends who have children involved in many of the same activities are the frequent starting points of many carpooling agreements. College students, high school students, and parents of students who are too young to drive frequently carpool to and from school in order to save money on gas, save money on parking, decrease the environmental impact, and promote friendships.

If starting your own carpool, a shared desire to carpool is the necessary first step in attracting others to join. You can post notices in the break room at work, ask other parents at your child's school, send out an email, post a notice at church, or advertise through your neighborhood association, for example. Carpooling requires coordination, cooperation, and flexibility and might be best first implemented on a trial basis.

Carpooling Services

There are carpooling services available throughout the St. Louis region. Several organizations offer ridematching services where people looking for a ride or riders can input their information, and the organization will match you with a carpool or vanpool that might work for you. Several of these services are listed under the Discover More tab.

Things to Consider

When using a carpooling service or starting your own at work, it is best to remember that it is not necessarily a permanent solution. Typically if the carpool is not working for you, you can decline to continue using it. Carpooling is flexible, so do not hesitate to schedule doctor appointments, errands, and other responsibilities in fear of breaking the carpool. Lastly, carpool etiquette should not be ignored. Offering money to the driver, remaining seated and unobstructive to the driver, listening to your individually desired music through headphones, and respecting the driver's vehicle are all potential ways of keeping a high level of etiquette while riding.

Other basic rules of the carpool need to be established, as well. Smoking, eating, drinking, talking, and the radio station can all be decided before the carpool begins. Time for pickup and dropoff can also be decided upon, but it is necessary to remember potential traffic and construction delays.

Planning & Zoning

Parking Preferences

One of the easiest ways to promote ridesharing is to create or designate preferential parking spaces for people who choose to engage in carpooling or vanpooling. Erecting a sign at a certain amount of specific parking spots designating them for carpooling only can encourage individuals to form carpools if the parking spaces are ideal. Hangtags that are placed on the rear-view mirror of a carpool vehicle can serve to indicate that the particular vehicle is allowed to park in the space.



Financial Incentive Programs

Besides parking preferences, another policy organizations can utilize to promote ridesharing may include pre-tax subsidies. Organizations can provide employees with a pre-tax subsidy or allow them to use pre-tax wages strictly for vanpooling.

Carpool Lanes

Governmental bodies can promote carpooling by designating specific carpool lanes on major thoroughfares throughout their community. Often found in the furthest left lanes, carpool lanes can offer a smoother commute with less traffic to those vehicles carrying more than one person. Enforcement would be necessary, but if drivers know they will have a smoother, easier ride by carpooling, there may be increased use.



Liability to Employers

Section 285.200 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri and 625 ILCS 5/10-202 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes remove liability from employers for those employees who choose to participate in a rideshare, vanpool, or carpool activity. In other words, if a vanpool gets into an accident on the way to work, the employer is not liable.

Dollars & Cents

Costs of Individual Carpool

[AAA](#) offers an estimate of the average cost per mile to drive a car, which can be helpful in deciding how much riders should pay the driver. If drivers are taking turns driving, typically the riders do not pay anything as there is distribution of gas, maintenance, and parking costs from all participants in the carpool. Each carpool is different, however, and there is not one clear method of how the cost is determined.

[Rideshare](#) offers a calculator to find out how much money can be saved annually by carpooling.

Costs of Using a Carpool Service

[RideFinders](#) is a St. Louis regional organization which provides several resources and options available to people looking for ridesharing options. They offer a free ridematching service to carpoolers, a Guaranteed Ride Home service, and other useful information. [Enterprise Rideshare](#) also offers opportunities and resources to groups seeking to carpool.

Measuring Success

The success of carpooling programs and advocacy is best measured by how many people choose to participate in ridesharing activities. The greater the number of people who carpool, the lower the number of vehicles on the road, emissions in the atmosphere, money spent on fuel, and money spent on infrastructure improvements.

State/Federal Carpool Statistics

According to the 2012 American Community Survey produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly 141 million people aged 16 years and older commute to work. Of that 141 million, roughly 13.7 million people, or 9.7 percent, participate in a carpool. About 10.6 million people participate in a 2-person carpool, 1.8 million participate in a 3-person carpool, 675,000 participate in a 4-person carpool, 339,000 participate in a 5 or 6-person carpool, and 283,000 participate in a 7-or-more person carpool.

In comparison, about 107.5 million people drove to work alone.

Local Carpool Statistics

The [Transportation Choice](#) metric on the [OneSTL Indicators](#) page tracks workers in the St. Louis region who commute by modes other than single-occupancy vehicle (including by carpooling).

According to the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership, 5.3 million of the 7.2 million vehicular trips St. Louisans make each day are single-occupancy trips. In addition, one person riding in a carpool or vanpool can save the environment 225 pounds of emissions every year. Lastly, the Partnership reports that the average commuter can save about \$3,500 per year by ridesharing to work.

In 2010, the [St. Louis Post Dispatch](#) reported that 9,800 people in the St. Louis region pool to work through RideFinders.

According to the Director of RideFinders, Joseph Wright, as of October 7th 2013, RideFinders has 3,313 registered carpools transporting 7,356 carpoolers.

Future Goals and Success

Although slightly higher than the national average, the number of people who rideshare to work in the St. Louis region is still very low. Advocacy and information needs to continue to be dispersed throughout the region. Workers within the St. Louis region love their cars. The only way more people are going to carpool is if the information is readily available, the workers are interested in carpooling, and organizations like RideFinders and Enterprise Rideshare continue to exist.

Discover More

[Commute Solutions](#) offers information regarding frequently asked questions about carpooling.

The [Missouri Department of Transportation](#) offers links to Missouri's ridesharing websites.

[RideFinders](#) is a St. Louis regional organization which provides several resources and options available to people looking for ridesharing options. They offer a free ridematching service to carpoolers, a Guaranteed Ride Home service, and other useful information.

[Enterprise Rideshare](#) also offers opportunities and resources to individuals and groups seeking a carpool or vanpool. The website offers information regarding how to set up a vanpool, how to use the federal Transportation Incentive Program subsidy, and other useful information.

Section 132(f) of the Internal Revenue Service Code offers [Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefits](#) to commuters for their use of carpooling practices. In 2013, commuters could exclude up to \$245 per month in transit benefits. These Qualified Transportation Benefits are excluded from an employee's gross income for income tax purposes and are excluded from an employee's wages for payroll tax purposes.

Case Studies

Graybar Preferential Parking for Carpools

Contact

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Description

Graybar implanted a number of strategies at its Centerpoint Facility in 2011 aimed at improving the facility's sustainability. Among these strategies was an effort to reduce the number of cars parked at the facility by encouraging carpool participation in RideFinders. As a component of this strategy, Graybar implemented a preferential parking program for employees who carpooled to work. Utilizing free parking signs and vehicle hang tags provided by RideFinders, Graybar established parking spots near the front of the building for employees who registered a carpool, with RideFinders. This resulted in a 111% increase in Graybar's employee participation in RideFinders. More employees carpooling significantly reduced the number of vehicles and driving miles by employees, which resulted in less traffic congestion and improved air pollution at Graybar and for the St. Louis region.

Cost

There was no cost associated with this program as RideFinders provided the preferential parking signs and vehicle signs to Graybar for free.

Lessons Learned

Designating preferential parking for carpools at the front of the worksite is a free and simple, yet effective way for employers to increase carpool participation. The more incentives an employer offers its employees to carpool, the more employees will carpool.

RideFinders Rideshare Program

Contact

Joseph Wright
Director of RideFinders
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Address

One Transit Way - P.O. Box 7500 - Granite City, IL 62040-7500

Description

RideFinders is the St. Louis regional rideshare program that is required as part of the region's transportation program to improve air quality to help attain National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Created by Madison County Transit (MCT) in 1994, RideFinders provides various marketing and outreach services to help individuals carpool, vanpool or take public transit to work or school instead of driving alone – reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. RideFinders is operated by MCT as a free marketing and outreach public service using 100 percent federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funding, with 80 percent from Missouri and 20 percent from Illinois. Individuals must commute to, from, within or through the region shown to be eligible for RideFinders services.

RideFinders is located at the Madison County Transit (MCT) headquarters at One Transit Way; P.O. Box 7500; Granite City, Ill. 62040-7500, and receives ongoing financial, technical, planning, marketing and supervisory support from MCT staff. RideFinders provides a toll-free phone number, 800-VIP-RIDE (800-847-7433), to assist commuters Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. RideFinders also utilizes customized RidePro ridematching software to help commuters rideshare, online RidePro matching software to help parents Schoolpool and various programs created by MCT for administering the vanpool program.

Cost

RideFinders provides a free ridematching service for commuters to help them find other commuters to rideshare with and free taxi rides home for ridesharing commuters to provide peace of mind knowing they have a ride home. RideFinders also provides a vanpool program for large groups of commuters to share the ride the ride to work in RideFinders vans for a monthly fare that varies from as low as \$58 to as much as \$487 per person, with the typical fare around \$100 – 125 per person. These monthly fares cover 100% of the monthly operating costs.

Lessons Learned

Unlike public transit which is the only transportation available for many individuals, ridesharing is only a transportation option for most commuters that is far less attractive than driving alone. Our region also does not have terrible traffic congestion nor dedicated traffic lanes for carpools/vanpools, which makes ridesharing not any faster than driving alone. Also, our region's low gas prices and abundant free or low-cost parking do not make ridesharing significantly lower cost than driving alone, at least in direct costs that impact commuters. The key is to create awareness, interest and motivation for commuters to at least try ridesharing, as generally this

results in commuters continuing to rideshare once they realize ridesharing offers financial, environmental and personal benefits.