



# Vanpool Program Features

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Welcome to CommuteSmart's Vanpool Program. This informational guide will briefly overview the program's features and benefits. Please don't hesitate to call us at **205-264-8412** if you have questions or need additional information.

## What is a vanpool?

A vanpool is a group of five or more riders who want to save time and money and reduce stress on their way to work. They voluntarily travel together to and from work in a shared van, they all share in the cost of their commute. Vanpool management and operations for CommuteSmart are contracted through Commute with Enterprise.

## Who drives the van?

A vanpool coordinator is a voluntary role, they take responsibility for the vanpool, arrange to have the vehicle serviced, and are the point person between the vanpool and CommuteSmart. The vanpool coordinator is also the primary driver, but most vans have two to four people who share driving duties.

All drivers must be 25 years or older and meet minimum driver requirements, which vary by state. As part of the Commute with Enterprise driver application process, each driver's motor vehicle record is checked annually to comply with our policies.

## What are the 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, and clean the van regularly.

## What are the passengers' responsibilities?

Each person should be at the pick-up point on time, share in the monthly cost of the commute promptly, discuss and agree on rules for the van, provide 30 days' notice of their intention to leave the group, and wear their seatbelts. Two to four passengers must also be approved as alternate drivers to share in the driving responsibilities. All participants should work with the vanpool coordinator to help recruit passengers to maintain a full van which keeps the cost as low as possible.

## Why should I vanpool?

Vanpooling saves the average commuter 50%-75% versus driving alone; it saves time and is less stressful. It also reduces the number of cars on our roadways, saves thousands of gallons of fuel, and drastically reduces air pollution annually.

## How much does it cost to vanpool?

Pricing varies based on the size of the van, number of riders, the round-trip distance, and the type of equipment in the vehicle. Compared to the cost of driving alone for long-distance commutes, vanpooling will save, on average, 50-75%. The monthly fee of each vanpool is shared among all the participants in the vanpool.

The cost to vanpool is often comparable to what you pay for just gasoline. When considering the wear and tear, maintenance, tires, and incidental costs associated with driving alone, vanpooling is very economical—Call **205-264-8412** for specific pricing.

## What types of vehicles are used?

We offer various late-model vehicle options for vanpools, including minivans, passenger vans with standard bench-style seating, or fully converted passenger vans with individual reclining captain's seats. We also offer a line of crossovers and SUVs.

## How is vehicle maintenance handled?

The vanpool contractor, Commute with Enterprise, covers minor and major repairs and all scheduled maintenance. Each vanpool vehicle is delivered with a maintenance card, appointments for service are arranged at a vendor location convenient to the vanpool coordinator. The vendor performs the work requested and invoices Commute with Enterprise for the service/repair. If the van needs to be kept in a shop overnight, Commute with Enterprise will provide a loaner vehicle in most instances. There are no out-of-pocket expenses as the repair shops bill Commute with Enterprise directly.

## What type of insurance coverage is provided?

Our comprehensive insurance coverage is provided through the contract for vanpooling and includes "1 million Combined Single Limit Auto Liability, Comprehensive/Collision, and Uninsured Motorist" coverage.

## What else should I know?

**The Emergency Ride Home Program-** CommuteSmart also includes an Emergency Ride Home Program to help get you home in an emergency. You have chosen to leave your car at home, we want you to feel comfortable making that decision. The Emergency Ride Home Program will give you the confidence to continue vanpooling. See full Emergency Ride Home program details and guidelines for more information.

**Tax Advantages to Vanpooling-** The IRS enables employers to provide up to \$315 per month per employee for 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 implementing a tax-free vanpool benefit, we offer CommuterBuck Vouchers. Employers can purchase CommuterBucks in the denominations and quantities they need for their vanpool employees. Employees remit the voucher to their vanpool coordinator as part of their payments.

**Reducing Air Pollution-** It is no secret that the City of Birmingham has experienced its share of air quality issues; however, improvements have been made over the years. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is continually strengthening the standards. A leading contributor to bad air quality or "smog" is auto emissions, so utilizing CommuteSmart can help our community reach these standards. 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 their car, if you are commuting to a heavily congested area, there is a good chance that someone from your neighborhood is doing the same thing. We must do our part to reduce single-occupant vehicle (SOV) traffic and air pollution. Jefferson and Shelby Counties are beautiful areas; we want to do everything possible to ensure it stays that way!

**For More Information about CommuteSmart Commuter Services, call  
205-264-8412 or visit us at [www.commutessmart.org](http://www.commutessmart.org).**

*CommuteSmart's Vanpool Program is operated and maintained by Commute with Enterprise, 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 the Jefferson and Shelby County areas. This information is provided as a guide and may be appended, modified, or changed at any time without notice. 1/1/2023*