



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Be aware that this document is specific to vanpools leased through a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor where the applicant is interested in applying for a SolVan subsidy online at SolVan.org. SolVan also provides subsidies through the California Vanpool Authority (CalVans) and information on CalVans' vanpools can be found at SolVan.org.

CONSIDERING VANPOOLING? READ ON.

What is vanpooling, and is vanpooling the right choice for me?

Do you commute a long distance to work? Are your work days and work hours relatively consistent -- or do they have the potential to be? If so, you may be an ideal candidate for vanpooling. A SolVan Vanpool is a group of five to 15 people who commute together on a regular basis in a van. One person usually drives and maintains the van while passengers pay a monthly fare. Vanpools that qualify for the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program are leased through one of the Program's qualified vanpool Leasing Vendor by either their employer or a vanpool passenger.

What are the benefits of vanpooling?

Vanpooling saves you money on fuel and commuting costs. If your vanpool qualifies for the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program, your van will receive an ongoing subsidy of up to \$400 per month OR \$500 per month if leasing a qualified zero emission vehicle. By vanpooling you will also be able to reduce wear and tear on your car, save time by traveling in carpool lanes and thus reduce traffic and air pollution. Vanpool participants may also qualify for special perks at work, such as preferred parking, prize drawings, subsidies and more (perks may vary by Employer). Studies have shown that vanpool participants successfully lower their commuting stress and it is also an excellent way to meet new friends.

How much does it cost to vanpool?

The cost will vary depending on the size of the van, van features, commute distance, number of passengers, fare subsidies, etc. Many times, the vanpool group agrees to permit the vanpool Primary Driver to commute for free or at a reduced fare. After this is determined then the balance of the lease and expenses is distributed equally among the vanpool passengers. The monthly lease payment will cover the van lease, insurance and maintenance costs. It is recommended that you speak with a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor or to see if they also accept TransitChek and the Federal Mass Transportation Benefits Program (MTBP) vouchers.

Will a vanpool pick me up at home?

To reduce the number of pick-ups and drop-offs, ensuring that everyone arrives to work and home quickly, most vanpoolers choose to meet at Park'N'Ride lots (<http://www.ie511.org/rideshare/park-and-ride>) or other agreed-upon locations along the way. The vanpool group will agree upon all pick up and drop off locations along the vanpool route.

What if I'm late or someone else keeps us waiting?

To ensure an efficient and compatible vanpool, the Leaseholder, Primary Driver and passengers should cooperate to define the pickup schedule and waiting policies best suited to their vanpool route. It is up to each vanpool group to determine and set a standard waiting period; five to seven minutes is common for the van to wait for all its passengers to arrive.

What if I'm sick or go on vacation - do I still have to pay for my seat?

Your monthly fare reserves your seat whether you use it or not. If you intend to be gone for an extended period, most vanpool groups allow you to temporarily "sublet" your seat to another passenger. Remember, even if you miss a day here or there, vanpooling is still a bargain compared to driving alone.

If I become sick at work, how do I get home?

Contact your employer to see if they offer a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in the event of a personal emergency or any other unforeseen event should a rideshare/vanpool participant need a ride home from work. Or, see if your employer participates in the Regional GRH Program, offered through IE Commuter – dial 866-RIDESHARE (866.743.3742) and you will be connected to a representative who will assist you.

Are there Vanpool Group rules/guidelines?

It is up to each vanpool group to establish rules/guidelines that cover such things as playing the radio (what the group listens to), tardiness, vanpool etiquette, internal conflicts, etc. The vanpool Leaseholder may set some policies for their vanpool group, while other rules may be voted upon by all passengers. Serious conflicts that cannot be resolved within the vanpool group may be brought to the attention of your Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) or your SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor.

I'm trying to start a vanpool and don't have quite enough passengers. What should I do?

First, review the minimum SolVan occupancy requirements (refer to the SolVan Vanpool Program Guidelines). If your vanpool does not meet the minimum occupancy requirements, contact SolVan and your SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor to see if they are aware of any "waiting list" candidates that would be a good fit for your vanpool. You can also contact IE Commuter directly by calling 866-RIDESHARE (866.743.3742) for assistance locating other interested vanpoolers. If based on the size of your vehicle and the number of commuters you still do not meet the minimum occupancy requirements, then you have several additional options as well: consider a smaller van size and/or speak with your Human Resources/Relations department or Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) who may know of potential vanpool passengers.

What if I already have a vanpool that is leased through a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor - can I participate in the SolVan Vanpool Program Subsidy?

Yes, you can participate in the Program; however, you must still qualify and apply to the Program. Please follow the process identified in the Vanpool Program Guidelines and as summarized in the SolVan Application and Reporting Requirements Section below. Should you have a lease with a leasing company other than a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor, SolVan will not accept that lease agreement and you will not qualify for the Vanpool Program Subsidy. Also remember that you are only required to enter into a month-to-month lease with a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor; however, a longer-term lease period is permitted and may reduce your lease costs and is at your

discretion. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us at 877-4SOLVAN (877.476.5826). We encourage you to review the SolVan-Approved Vendor leasing information on the SolVan website at SolVan.org.

Do I need to own a van to apply to the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program?

No. In fact, the SolVan Vanpool Program vehicles must be leased by either a commuter or a commuter's Employer through a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor. Commuter vehicles are provided on a month-to-month lease basis. The monthly lease also includes insurance and maintenance. SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors also offer information and assistance for recruiting passengers and setting fares and policies. If you own your own van and decide to start a vanpool, or, if you participate in a vanpool owned by your employer, you will not qualify for the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program.

Why can't I use the existing vehicle through a lease that I have with my car company?

Federal requirements govern the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program. We were required to conduct a formal procurement process to place under contract Vanpool Leasing Vendors. The procurement was conducted, was publicly advertised and the Vendors who applied were required to follow many federal requirements. As a result of this procurement process, the SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors were selected and approved to provide leased vehicles for the program. A lease through any other leasing company (other than the SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors or CalVans) are not permitted for participation in the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program. Visit the Program website at SolVan.org for information on SolVan-approved Vanpool Leasing Vendors.

If SolVan approves my vanpool application, am I or my vanpool passengers eligible for any other vanpool subsidies or incentives, either through another public agency or my employer?

Once SolVan approves a vanpools' participation in the Vanpool Subsidy Program, the participants in the vanpool (including the Leaseholder, the Primary Driver and all passengers) are no longer eligible to receive subsidies from a neighboring Vanpool Subsidy Program (such as Los Angeles Metro, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, San Diego Association of Governments, or the Victor Valley Transit Authority). Vanpool participants are also not eligible to receive any further vanpool subsidies from IE Commuter – which is a staggered nine-month vanpool subsidy funded by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC). Nor may the Leaseholder or any of the vanpool passengers receive the three-month \$2 a day subsidy for new ridesharing commuters provided by IE Commuter. Accepting subsidies from any of the above-mentioned programs while receiving a SolVan Vanpool Program Subsidy simultaneously will immediately disqualify the vanpool and its passengers from participating in the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program.

The types of incentives or subsidies that are permitted, while receiving the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy, are Employer Subsidies which are provided directly to any of the vanpool passengers by their employer. The types of subsidies include, but are not limited to, the Federal Mass Transportation Benefits Program (MTBP). If an Employer subsidy is funded by the types of incentives identified in the prior paragraph above, then those types of subsidies/incentives are not permitted if you are enrolled in the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program.

In addition, IE Commuter also offers a reward program called *Rideshare Plus* for Riverside County and San Bernardino County residents that have been ridesharing for three or more months. Qualified vanpool Leaseholder and passengers are permitted to apply and participate in this reward program – for more information, call IE Commuter at (866) RIDESHARE (866.743.3742).

Are there other employer-provided benefits for vanpooling?

As an added bonus both employers and employees can benefit by participating in “Commuter Benefits”, a program outlined in the federal tax code that offers employers tax breaks for subsidizing vanpools for employees. In addition, employees may benefit when they set aside pre-tax dollars for vanpool commuting expenses. For more information, talk to your Human Resources/Relations department or your employer’s ETC or go to the Commuter Benefits’ website at <http://commuterbenefits.com/>.

If I start a Vanpool, do I have to be the Primary Driver?

No, you do not have to be the Primary Driver. Vanpool duties may include helping your vanpool get on the road by recruiting a Primary Driver or alternate driver(s), helping to find passengers, and researching leasing requirements. If you are not the vanpool’s Leaseholder, once the vanpool is up and running, you can simply pay your fare and be a passenger. Or you may offer to be an Alternate Vanpool Reporter and assist the Leaseholder with monthly reporting/logging. Remember, if you are the Leaseholder and not the Primary Driver, the Primary Driver must also submit a Participation Agreement (found at SolVan.org/PA) in order to complete the SolVan vanpool application process, in addition to complying with the SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor’s Primary Driver requirements as well.

I want to join a vanpool, but have been told I must qualify as a driver to join. I just want to be a passenger. Do I have to qualify as a driver?

No, you do not have to qualify as a driver. One of the advantages to joining a vanpool is that you can simply be a passenger and enjoy a relaxed ride. In order for the vanpool to continue to receive the SolVan Program Subsidy, you cannot be discriminated against if you are either unwilling or unable to drive. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact SolVan at (877) 4-SOLVAN (877.476.5826).

What are the advantages of being a Vanpool Primary Driver?

Since every vanpool sets its own rules, the benefits of driving will vary based on how you choose to organize your vanpool. In exchange for driving and scheduling van maintenance appointments, Primary Drivers often ride at a discount or for free, and may also have limited use of the van on evenings and weekends (please refer to the Program Participation Agreement, as non-commute, nights/weekend use of the leased van shall not exceed 20%). Other vanpools split the driving duties between several people, giving each of them a discount. Or, your vanpool may prefer to run more like a “co-op” with everyone taking a turn at driving, collecting fares, handling maintenance responsibilities, etc.

Is the Vanpool Program available to persons with disabilities?

Yes – the SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors have accessible vehicles available for vanpool groups that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Particularly, if there is a vacancy in a vanpool and a person with a disability applies for a seat, the vanpool and the SolVan Vendor must make accommodations for the individual to become a vanpool member. SolVan contractually requires the SolVan Vendors to comply with this ADA requirement.

SOLVAN APPLICATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

I'm interested in starting a vanpool and taking advantage of the SolVan Vanpool Program Subsidy – what do I need to do?

There are a few steps you must take to qualify and be accepted into the SolVan Vanpool Subsidy Program. SolVan only accepts applications online at [SolVan.org](https://www.solvan.org). If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, contact SolVan for assistance at SolVan@SunLine.org or call us at (877) 4-SOLVAN (877.476.5826). **ALL** of the following criteria must be met to qualify (some of these criteria are explained further below):

1. Only the individual who holds the lease (aka Leaseholder) may apply to SolVan to participate in the program. SolVan will not accept applications from other vanpool passengers or the Primary Driver, if they are NOT the Leaseholder;
2. The vanpool must be used for commuting purposes to and from work or a vocational/post-secondary education destination (AKA “worksite”);
3. The vanpool driver must be a volunteer and a commuter in the program;
4. You must lease your van through a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor;
5. Minimum occupancy at van start up must be at 70% or higher;
6. Your round-trip travel to and from work must be at least 25 miles; and
7. Your commute must either begin or end within Eastern Riverside County (complete list of participating areas can be found in the Program Guidelines).

Log onto [SolVan.org](https://www.solvan.org) and select the “Apply Today” button on the Home Page. The first step is to complete a Qualification Form, which asks you a few simple questions to determine if you qualify for the Program. If you meet the minimum qualification requirements identified above, then you will receive an email from SolVan.org to let you know that you qualify and the next and instructions on how to fill out the full application. If you do not qualify, SolVan staff will contact you as to why, and you may try again (if you inputted in error for example) or discuss your qualification form further with SolVan for clarification.

You must still go through this process even if you have an existing vanpool lease from a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor. If you have an existing vanpool lease from any other 3rd party leasing company, you are not qualified to participate in this subsidy program. Should you change your lease to a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor, then you may proceed to qualify for the Program. After you qualify, you will be provided a username and password so that you may continue with the application process online.

SolVan recommends that if you do qualify for the Program, but do not have an existing lease, the next step is to contact the SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors to review lease rates and their terms and conditions. You are only required to enter into a month-to-month lease with a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor.

Once your lease is executed or about to be executed, then you must finalize your route, recruit passengers, set fares, vanpool rules and policies, and so on. The selected Primary Driver must also fulfill any legal requirements for driving a vanpool as well as any SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor requirements for driving their vehicles. Your leasing vendor is an invaluable ally in your efforts to pull together a vanpool and can assist in all of these areas.

If you already have a lease, or upon executing a lease with a SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor, then continue with the SolVan.org online application. You will need the following information as you complete this online application process:

1. **Sections A & B -Contact Information:** Leaseholder's contact information and information about your employer (employer address and employer representative contact information).
2. **Section C - Vanpool Schedule:** Identify the days of the week the vanpool is typically in operation. Provide the time the vanpool usually leaves the home end and arrives at work, as well as when the vanpool leaves work at the end of the day and arrives back home. Also note if there are any variances to your schedule, such as a different schedule every other week (if a 9/80 work schedule) or other variances.
3. **Section D - Vanpool PickUp/DropOff Locations:** Provide physical addresses and/or landmarks of all locations the vanpool picks up passengers on the way to work, and all locations at the work end passengers are dropped off. Be aware the vanpool begins its route when the Primary Driver starts up the van each workday. That location can be at the Primary Driver's home, or at a Park'N'Ride lot, or another location. But this location where the Driver starts the vanpool is considered the first "pick up" location of the vanpool route. Then continue to identify all other location(s) the vanpool will be picking up vanpool passengers on your way to work, as well as the location(s) that you drop off passengers at work and where you park the vanpool during the work day. A major cross street, landmark or physical address of each location is required.
4. **Section E - Passenger List/Vanpool Manifest:** Provide the names, email addresses, a contact phone and the employer name of each of the vanpool passengers, including the Primary Driver. You will also identify if you are not the Primary Driver, which of the passengers listed in this Vanpool Manifest, is the Primary Driver. In addition, should you desire to have a vanpool passenger assist you with the monthly reporting requirements, then you will identify the passenger who will serve as the Alternate Vanpool Reporter.
5. **Participation Agreements:** The SolVan website has a page called "[Participation Agreement](#)" that certain vanpool Participants are required to read, agree to and sign online.
 - a. Every Leaseholder must sign the online Participation Agreement.
 - b. If the Leaseholder is NOT the vanpool's Primary Driver, then the Primary Driver must be included in the passenger list and identified as such. When doing so, SolVan will send him/her a request to visit the website and read, agree to and sign the online Participation Agreement, as well. The Primary Driver executing an online Participation Agreement is a Program requirement.
 - c. Should in your application you select a passenger as an Alternate Vanpool Reporter to assist you in the monthly reporting/logging responsibilities, upon selection, SolVan will send him/her a request to read, agree to and sign the online Participation Agreement. SolVan encourages you to designate an Alternate Vanpool Reporter in the event you are away on vacation or unavailable to complete monthly reporting requirements. It should be someone you can depend on as the reporting and logging responsibilities are important. The Alternate Vanpool Reporter executing an online Participation Agreement is a Program requirement.
 - d. Should in the future you have changes to your vanpool's Primary Driver or Alternate Vanpool Reporter, those persons will be required to submit an online Participation Agreement.
6. **Passenger List/Vanpool Manifest Form:** The SolVan website has a page called "Passenger List Form" that is required for your monthly reports/log submittals. Note that this form can only be filled out after you have taken possession of your vanpool and have started commuting. Go to the website at [SolVan.org/passenger-list-form](#), review the instructions and download the attachment so that you can provide detailed odometer readings for each passenger and identify which passengers board and alight at each stop. When the sheet is completed, attach it to the online form and submit. Note that should you have any future changes to your vanpool, you will be asked to update this form and re-submit.
7. **SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendors:** SolVan will notify your Leasing Vendor of your application, who will submit specific information about the leased vehicle, provide a copy of the lease and identify the date your lease is signed. SolVan will include this information in your application and you will be able to

view this information, but not change it online. Should you have questions about this information, please contact SolVan

8. **Section F - Complete Application:** Upon completing the online sections, and submitting the Participation Agreement and Passenger List forms, you are asked to check three boxes to confirm that all the necessary steps are complete. Upon checking these boxes, SolVan will review the application and possibly contact you, your vanpool passengers or your SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor for additional information.
9. **Approval and Next Steps.** Upon approval, SolVan will notify you, along with the start date of your subsidy and the exact amount of your subsidy. Note that subsidy may **start the first of the month or on a date during the month, following SolVan approval**. SolVan will also provide you (and your Alternate Vanpool Reporter if one is identified) with login information and procedures for monthly reporting that is through an online system called TransTrack. For steps on monthly reporting, go to the SolVan [website](#) and download the document “Steps/Instructions for Monthly Reporting”.

Once enrolled, when does the Vanpool Program subsidy begin?

Completed applications (including all items identified in above) must be received and accepted by SolVan to be considered for a subsidy. SolVan will coordinate with your SolVan-Approved Leasing Vendor and the vanpool's Leaseholder as to when the SolVan vanpool will start, and will do our best to start the subsidy shortly after you start your vanpool. If the subsidy begins during the month, SolVan will prorate the subsidy based on your anticipated commute days during the month. However, there are times that the subsidy may not begin until the 1st of the following month after approval. Should the online application not be submitted or is not complete, approval may be delayed – make sure everything is complete and accurate upon submittal. Upon approval, the SolVan subsidy will appear as a credit on the month's vanpool lease statement from your Leasing Vendor.

What are the reporting/logging responsibilities?

The Leaseholder (and/or designated Alternate Vanpool Reporter) are responsible to document all required information to be submitted into SolVan's reporting system (called [TransTrack.net](#)). Logging is simple and primarily involves keeping track of who commutes to and from work each day during a calendar month period, any other major variances to your commute (in miles or travel time) and vehicle odometer reading at month end. SolVan asks that each vanpool keep a hard copy of an Intake Form referred to as a “Cheat Sheet” inside the van to track the information each day. This “Cheat Sheet” can be found on the SolVan [website](#) under Program Materials. With the information you gather each day, you can then log onto TransTrack.net and input the information daily, weekly, or at the end of the month, all at your convenience.

We also encourage that as you track your daily commute statistics, you also keep an accounting of any of the vanpool's out-of-pocket costs and vehicle expenses for the month (fuel, fluids/oil, car washes and so on). Even if your employer reimburses you for some or all of these expenses, please keep track and include those on the “Cheat Sheet” as the costs are incurred. It is important that the commute statistics and costs are tracked accurately and a complete report is inputted and submitted by no later than the **6th of the month** following the reporting period. For a detailed document outlining the reporting steps and process, go to the SolVan [website](#) and download the “Steps/Instructions for Monthly Reporting” document.