Vanpool Program Best Practices:

Telephone Survey of Vanpool Programs Nationwide and Summary of Current FTA Requirements

Draft Task 1 Technical Memorandum

Multi-Region Vanpool Incentive Program

November 2010

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APPENDICES

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the key findings of interviews with representatives from ten vanpool programs from across the country. The interviews consisted of reviewing a comprehensive set of questions about how each program is administered, how the program operates, what subsidies are provided, how the agency does NTD reporting, and a discussion about whether the program is comprised of any owner-operator vans, the prevalent type of vanpool in Northern Virginia and the Fredericksburg region.

While the research did not uncover a program that had anywhere near the number of private participants that a program in Northern Virginia might have, some key themes, key findings, and best practices was uncovered. However, because of the varied business plans of the van operators that makeup the vanpools in Northern Virginia a program in Northern Virginia would differ so greatly than the other programs already in existence, this program will have to be innovative in its design.

Some of the Key Themes discovered include:

- Organizational Structure: Public programs require more staff than turnkey-contractor programs.

- Program Rules/ADA Compliance: Programs rely on agreements with individual vanpools or van providers to follow program rules, including ADA Compliance, and to confirm that program rules are followed. There is little active monitoring of adherence to program rules.

- Most programs rely heavily on passenger fares to fund operations. CMAQ funds appear to be a primary source of capital funding. Other funds used include 5307 earnings and local taxes.

- The more automated and tech-focused an NTD reporting process is, the less staff time it takes to compile and confirm the data. In vanpool programs that lack a tech-focused NTD reporting method a significant amount of staff time is spent compiling and confirming NTD data.

- Most vanpool programs rely heavily on word of mouth and visibility. Branding of the vans is seen as a major marketing tool. Many agencies target major employers in their region to create new vanpools.

Some of the key findings include:

Ownership and Operation

The organizational structure of the vanpool programs interviewed varied, including public operations, private non-profit operation, and public-private partnerships. In general, the public programs require more staff than turnkey-contractor programs. Staffing sizes varied between the agencies interviewed. Some agencies had what could be considered skeletal staff sizes to handle their vanpool program regardless of the size of the program. Programs that had larger staff sizes typically had more individuals dedicated to customer service or business development/outreach.

Compliance with Public Transportation Requirements

Most agencies have very few program rules and leave rules associated with individual vanpools up to each group. Agency rules primarily focus on how payments are made, when and how to report data, and requirements to become a vanpool. All programs enforce the requirement that riders be added to existing vanpools if a seat is available, and all adhere to ADA guidelines.

Public Availability

Half of the agencies interviewed have no formal marketing budget or activities. These programs embed vanpool marketing into the overall Transportation Demand Management (TDM) outreach activities of their agency. The other half do advertise their programs in print and electronic media, and most of these also conduct employer-outreach activities. Unified vanpool program branding, having an identifiable program logo, website, and branded vanpool vehicles, was standard at all agencies interviewed and serve to raise awareness of the program for the general public.

Some of the Best Practices identified include:

Organizational Structure

Each of the organizational structures has pros and cons. In each case, the structure that is currently in place seems to work for the specific agency. While public-private partnerships tend to require fewer public staff, and therefore a lower public investment, it does take some of the program control away from the public agency and can limit the options that are available, particularly as it relates to the possibility of owner-operators participating in the program.

Program Requirements

It is the best, and the common practice, for programs to limit the number of rules for vanpools, so as not to discourage participation. It is also critical that the programs follow the public aspect of the program, i.e., offering available seats to persons who want to participate in the program, and following ADA requirements. While not many programs require it, the best practice in the agencies interviewed is one in which both a driving record check and background check is conducted on the drivers.

Marketing

The ideal way to grow the vanpool program is to have a multi-faceted, comprehensive marketing program that includes inclusion of the program in the overall Transportation Demand Management (TDM) outreach activities of the agency; conducting media advertisement, particularly at program launch; maintaining an informative and easy to understand program website; and using branding of the vehicles and the program.

Subsidies

Simple cash subsidies per seat appear to work well in the turnkey-contractor programs. Other forms of subsidies in the form of promotions to attract new vanpoolers, rewards for data submission, and other benefits to vanpoolers have worked well for recruiting new riders in markets where vanpooling is highly cost effective, even with limited or no employer subsidy. While true, this would not necessarily be applicable in the Northern Virginia region due to the high level of federal transit benefits.

NTD Data Collection

None of the agencies interviewed used a particularly easy approach to collecting NTD data. Given the labor intensive processes employed by all programs interviewed, an FTA-approved sampling plan does allow for less manual data entry; but it can be more prone to error than every day data collection. However, the implementation of data collection technologies is imminent in many of the agencies and would be a better approach than either type of manual data collection that is the norm in most agencies today.

Owner-Operator Participation

While participation by owner-operators in existing vanpool programs, particularly those that do report to NTD, is very minimal, a simple structure is needed so that the owner-operators are not turned away from the program by complicated contracting, compliance reporting, and data collection.

Insurance

While vanpools tend to have a high safety rate, requiring the provision of a minimum level of insurance is a critical component of the program in light of its connection to a public agency. The provision of insurance options that vanpool leasing companies and owner-operators can take advantage of, and potentially a state/regional insurance pool as a rainy day fund, can both offer options and peace of mind to participating vanpools.

Overall, the programs interviewed varied widely in their approaches to many aspects of the vanpool program, and any program in Northern Virginia/Fredericksburg will need to pick and choose the aspects of the other existing programs that would work best in this region.

2 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this task is to identify and document: 1) the requirements for a vanpool program that meets the FTA definition of public transportation and for which data can be reported to the National Transit Database (NTD); and 2) best practices of vanpool programs throughout the country that would be applicable to Northern Virginia, specifically related to engaging vanpools in program participation and obtaining the requisite NTD information.

As part of this task, the VHB Team conducted research into the current FTA requirements and what changes are likely over the near and long term. The Team also contacted ten of the nation's largest public vanpool programs, as defined by NTD reporting, to gain an understanding of best practices for the roles of the various program participants, how the programs get vanpools to participate, and how the programs collect data.

3 FTA REQUIREMENTS

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) considers vanpools a transit mode if the vanpool service provided meets FTA's definition of public transportation. Data for vanpool service that meets the public transportation definition can be reported to the National Transit Database (NTD).

An entity operating a public transportation service can apply to report data to the NTD. If the agency is approved by FTA, a reporting number is issued to the agency. The agency then can file the information with FTA's on-line reporting system in the same manner as all other NTD reporters. NTD reporting numbers can only be issued to public agencies and a single NTD reporting number must cover an entire program. Thus, if a vanpool reporting program is to be established in Northern Virginia, a public agency will have to be designated to manage the program and report to NTD. FTA uses selected data from the NTD reports to apportion funding in the Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307) to urbanized areas. If a vanpool service receives Section 5307 funding, it is required to report to NTD. Vanpool services that do not receive Section 5307 may submit voluntary reports to NTD. In either situation, FTA uses the reported data to apportion Section 5307 funding to the appropriate designated recipient.

This section first outlines the requirements for a vanpool program that meets the FTA definition of public transportation and for which data can be reported to the NTD. It then describes the changes that FTA is considering in its definition of vanpool public transportation.

Vanpools and FTA's Current Definition of Public Transportation

FTA considers vanpool service a public transit mode if it provides public transportation. FTA defines a vanpool as:

> *A transit mode comprised of vans, small buses and other vehicles operating as a ride sharing arrangement, providing transportation to a group of individuals traveling directly between their homes and a regular destination within the same geographical area. The vehicles shall have a minimum seating capacity of seven persons, including the driver.*[1]

Under the FTA regulations in effect as of October 2010, a vanpool program is considered to provide public transportation service if it meets the following conditions[2]:

- Public sponsorship,
- Compliance with public transportation requirements (ADA and non-exclusive formation), and
- Public availability**.**

Public sponsorship was defined to mean that the public agency must either:

- Operate the complete program or
- Own, purchase, or lease the vanpool vehicles.

FTA has considered and allowed contractual relationships with third party vendors such as VPSI and Enterprise to meet the leasing requirement. Although unwritten, FTA administratively used as a guideline for determining public agency involvement that about 25 percent of the total program cost (capital and operating) is supported by public agency funding.

In a Federal Register notice issued on October 5, 2010[3] proposed removing the requirement for public ownership or operation of the program. Those proposed changes are discussed later in this section.

FTA requires that the vanpool program comply with the same FTA and federal requirements as other public transportation modes such as motor bus, light rail, and heavy rail. The key requirements concern ADA and non-exclusive formation of vanpools. The vanpool program, as a whole, must provide sufficient numbers of accessible vehicles to meet the needs of passengers with ADA mobility issues. This does not mean that all vehicles must be ADA-accessible, but only that the needs are met so that passengers with ADA mobility issues are not excluded from participating in the vanpool program. FTA does not require that a vanpool be established to serve a person, with or without a disability, if there is no current vanpool operating between a given origin and destination. The requirement is that accommodations for a person with a disability must be provided if that person wishes to join an existing vanpool that has capacity.

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1 2010 NTD Glossary, page 60.
2 Ibid.
3 Federal Register Volume 75, Number 192 (Tuesday, October 5, 2010)]National Transit Database: Amendments to the Urbanized Area Annual Reporting Manual and to the Safety and Security Reporting Manual

The vanpool program must operate vanpools that are open to the general public and are not restricted to specific clients, employers, or other affinity groups. Individuals, including those with disabilities, must be given the opportunity to join vanpools as long as they share the same work arrival/departure times and travel origins/destinations as other vanpool members.

Filling empty seats is another aspect of non-exclusive formation of vanpools. A vanpool must accept new members if seats are available. A vanpool cannot reject a potential member because it wants to operate a less-congested van (e.g., 5 members for 7-passenger van) and the existing members are willing to “subsidize” or pay for the empty seats. FTA requires vanpools to accept members to fill the empty seats just as a bus operator accepts new passengers as long as there are empty seats (and sometimes extra standing capacity). It is not clear how FTA defines vehicle capacity and whether a vanpool operator could define a capacity less than that suggested by the manufacturer.

FTA requires that the public agency make marketing efforts to ensure that availability of the vanpool program is known to the general public. FTA has not listed the specific marketing efforts that are required. However, although unwritten, it is generally understood that these efforts would include information provided through:

- The public agency’s web site
- Written promotional materials
- Telephone information number

The marketing efforts must make it clear that the vanpool program is being operated as a public transportation service. The efforts should clearly communicate that the vanpool program will meet the travel needs of passengers with ADA mobility issues who wish to use the vanpool service.

FTA has said that the marketing efforts must indicate that the agency has a policy of the non-exclusive formation of vanpools. The efforts should include the support of individuals who wish to join an existing vanpool with empty seats. This “matching service” should insure that the requesting individuals are given the opportunity to join vanpools as long as they share the same work arrival/ departure times and travel origins/destinations as other vanpool members.

Potential Changes in FTA’s Definition of Vanpool Public Transportation

On October 5, 2010 FTA released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that included a revision of eligibility of vanpools for the NTD. The new rules would change the public sponsorship requirements for vanpools reporting to NTD, removing the requirement for direct involvement of a public agency in direct vanpool operations. It would eliminate the unwritten but commonly understood FTA requirement that about 25 percent of the total program cost (capital and operating) be supported by public agency funding. The elimination of this requirement would permit the NTD reporting of vanpool data for privately owned and operated vanpools to FTA. Managers at FTA believe that this change would be consistent with the way FTA historically has treated private bus operators. Private bus operators always have been permitted to voluntarily file NTD reports on the public transportation services that they operate.

In the NPRM the new rules for a vanpool program to be included in the NTD, a sponsor of vanpool service must demonstrate:

(1) That it is open to the public and that any vans that are restricted a priori to particular employers and which do not participate in the ride-matching service of the vanpool are excluded from the NTD report;
(2) that it actively engages in the following activities: advertising the vanpool service to the public, matching interested members of the public to vanpools with available seats, and reasonable planning to increase its service (when funding is available) to meet demand from additional riders;
(3) that the service is open to individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and
(4) that it has a record-keeping system in place to collect and report fully-allocated operating costs for the service.

The NPRM also clarifies the requirements for reporting fully-allocated operating costs, defining them as the total cost of the service, including:

(1) Any fuel, insurance, and maintenance costs paid by vanpool participants;
(2) all advertising and promotion costs;
(3) costs paid by any third-parties to support the vanpool program; and
(4) any contract administration costs borne by the vanpool sponsor.

It is possible that private vanpool leasing companies operating large fleets (e.g., VPSI) could meet these requirements. Therefore, there would be no need for the involvement of a public agency or vanpool cooperative. Leasing companies with smaller fleets or individual operators would likely have difficulty in demonstrating that all of the criteria were met unless they were part of a sponsored program. FTA is currently collecting public comments on the proposed rule changes and will issue a final rule by early 2011.

4 VANPOOL PROGRAM INTERVIEWS OVERVIEW

Background

A survey was developed to obtain information on best practices for how the nation's largest vanpool programs operate. The survey was designed to focus on the following key aspects of the vanpool programs operated by the ten agencies:

- Roles of the public agency and private contractors (if used) in the vanpool program.
- Level and type of financial involvement by the public agency in the program.
- Incentives for encouraging participation in the vanpool program.
- Approach for enrolling (converting) existing vanpools into the program.
- Impact of tax-free commuter benefit provided by employers on program participation.
- System for collecting and reporting operating and financial data for NTD reporting.

In developing the survey, the questions were divided into five main categories:

- Program history and how the program works
- Operations
- Incentives and subsidy
- NTD reporting and division of 5307 funds
- Independent owner/operators

Selection of Vanpool Programs

Initially, the largest vanpool programs from the 2007 NTD report were selected to be interviewed, as shown in **Table 1**. While every attempt was made to speak with a representative from each of these programs, only nine of these ten were interviewed. Table 2 shows the final list of interviewed agencies and their current size based on the interview, not the NTD.

Table 1: Initial Vanpool Programs Selected for Interviews

Agency	City	State	Number of Vans
King County	Seattle	WA	826
Pace	Arlington Heights	IL	677
San Diego Council of Governments	San Diego	CA	566
Metropolitan Transportation Authority	Houston	TX	545
Utah Transit Authority	Salt Lake City	UT	452
Metropolitan Transportation Authority	Los Angeles	CA	327
Snohomish County	Everett	WA	313
Valley Metro	Phoenix	AZ	310
Greater Hartford Ridesharing Corp.	Windsor	CT	302
Pierce County	Tacoma	WA	270
Total for Ten Systems			4,588
Total/Percent of 57 Reporting Systems			7,772 / 59%

Interviews Held

After contacting staff associated with each of the ten Vanpool programs listed in Table 1, interviews were held with nine of the original list. Since the San Diego Council of Governments could not be reached for an interview, they were replaced with a program in San Francisco, as one of the other interviewees suggested that program as one that may have similar characteristics to a potential vanpool program in Virginia.

The survey instrument used took the participants between 45 minutes and one hour and a half to complete. Because the length was anticipated, contacts were made in advance and an appointment was scheduled to speak with the participants. All interviews were conducted between August 20, 2010 and September X, 2010. The survey instrument is located in Appendix A-1.

The final list of interviews held and some overall details about the programs are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviewed Vanpool Programs

Agency	Interviewee and Agency	Number of Vans: 2007 NTD	Number of Vans (Based on Interview)	Program Type/Owner	Year Program Started	Number of Staff	Average Roundtrip	Average Vanpool Fare or Subsidy
King County, Seattle WA	Syd Pawlowski, Supervisor Rideshare Operations, Metro Transit Division	826	1,088 (End of Calendar Year 2009)	Public	1970s	38 FTEs	N/A	No long term subsidies; fares vary by type of vehicle, schedule, and number of riders
Pace, Arlington Heights IL	Kristian Skogsbakken, Rideshare Administrator	677	278 (Sept. 2010)	Public	1991	10 FTEs	80 miles	Fares vary based on distance traveled and number of riders in the van. The average fare per rider is $130
The Rideshare Company, Connecticut	Jan Mello, VP Operations; Mike Lenkiewicz, VP Finance; Kathy Naples, Manager Customer Service	566	531 (September 2010)	Non-profit	1987	4 Senior Mgmt, 4 Customer Svc, 4 Finance, 6 Business Development, & 5 Operations	35 miles	Rideshare provides no subsidies to their riders. The average fare varies depending on the size of the vehicle. Minivans have an average fare of $177 and full size vans have an average fare of $139.
Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Houston TX	David McMaster, Director STAR Regional Vanpool	545	708 (August 2010)	Contracted to a "master contractor" that works with private providers,	Private vanpools started in 1970s, public involvement began in 1980s	1 public FTE, 9 FTEs at the master contractor, several others part-time	55 miles	Flat subsidy of $35 per qualified rider, average van subsidy of $350
Utah Transit Authority, Salt Lake City UT	Wendy Karsch, Vanpool Support Specialist and Jan Maynard, Program Manager Special Services UTA	452	525 (Sept. 2010)	Public	Started under a private company in the 1980s and UTA took over in 1990	9 FTEs	77 miles	Fare varies based on the size of van and number of riders. The average federal subsidy is $125 per rider

Agency	Interviewee and Agency	Number of Vans: 2007 NTD	Number of Vans (Based on Interview)	Program Type/Owner	Year Program Started	Number of Staff	Average Roundtrip	Average Vanpool Fare or Subsidy
Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles CA	Jami Carrington, Program Manager	327	923 (End of FY 2010)	Turnkey program with private operators VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare	2007	2.5 FTE, another 2 less than FTE as-needed	95 miles	Subsidizes 50% of van costs up to $400
Snohomish County – Community Transit, Everett WA	Dawn Kirsch, Supervisor, Vanpool Program	313	396 (August 2010)	Public	1986	5 FTE	58 miles	$60-$65
Valley Metro, Phoenix, AZ	Gary Roberts, Vanpool Coordinator	310	323 (August 2010)	Public with administrative contractor	Approximately 1990	1 Public FTE	64 miles	$87.15
511 RideMatch Services, San Francisco CA	Susan Heinrich	N/A	545 (Sept. 2010)	Public oversight of contractor who runs the ride match program	1978	2 FTEs who work for MTC and 15 FTEs who are contracted to operate the ride match program	60 miles	Unknown
Pierce County, Tacoma WA	Lani Fowlkes, Vanpool Assistant Manager	270	326	Public	1986	11 FTEs, including 2 program managers	65 miles	$80-$85

5 INTERVIEW RESULTS

The ten interviews that were held yielded a significant amount of information that will be helpful as Virginia evaluates the potential for implementing a multi-regional vanpool program. There are also key findings about the operation of the programs that will be a great asset as the program is designed.

While the full interview summaries are provided in Appendix A-2, the key information that was received through the interviews is shown in Table 3 and in the section that follows. The key information presented is focused on what could be applicable to a vanpool program in Virginia.

Table 3: Cross-Program Comparison

	King County, Seattle WA	Pace, Arlington IL	Ride Share, Hartford CT	MTA, Houston TX	UTA, Salt Lake City UT	LACMTA, Los Angeles CA	Community Transit, Snohomish County WA	Valley Metro, Phoenix AZ	Ride Match, San Francisco CA	Pierce County, Tacoma WA
Program Structure/ Who Runs It	Public: operations, van ownership, maintenance, administration	Public: operations, van ownership, maintenance, administration	Private Non-profit: all operational and administrative functions performed in-house	Turnkey-Contractors: A single public MTA employee manages a master contractor that operates the program	Public: operations, van ownership, maintenance, administration	Turnkey-Contractors: Vendors VPSI and Enterprise manage vanpool formation, maintenance, and program applications	Public: operations, van ownership, maintenance, administration	Turnkey-Contractors	Turnkey-Contractors	Public: operations, van ownership, maintenance, administration
Size	1,088 (December 2009)	278 (September 2010)	531 (September 2010)	708 (August 2010)	525 (Sept. 2010)	923 (End of FY 2010)	396 (August 2010)	323 (August 2010)	545 (Sept. 2010)	326
Funding	100% farebox funded (50% for operations, 30% admin, 30% capital)	CMAQ grants pay for the purchase of vehicles. Rider fares cover the majority of the operating costs.	Operations are covered through fares. Capital expenses are funded through private loans. Receive CMAQ funding from the state for marketing purposes.	Local funding, federal grants	CMAQ, fares, and UTA sales tax	5307	Predominately farebox supported	Operations are funded through fares. Capital costs are covered through 5307, FHWA Surface Transportation Program, JARC, and State Public Transportation funds	CMAQ and funding from local air district	Predominately farebox supported
Van Ownership	Public Agency	Public Agency	Private Non-Profit	Contractors and major employers	Public Agency	Contractors VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare	Public Agency	Public Agency	Mix of user-owned, VPSI and Enterprise owned, and employer owned vans	Public Agency
Vanpool Formation	State-run ridematching service	Vanpool representatives walk interested parties through the application process. Drivers must submit to various checks and a driving course prior to approval. The service also performs ridematching.	Interested parties can either join an existing vanpool or form a new one. New vans require a specified number of riders based on the van size.	Online ridematching registration service, the program's master contractor then assists interested individuals with vanpool formation	Applicants meet requirements and apply	Vendors VPSI and Enterprise assist with van formation. The agency also has an online ridematching website that lists open vanpool seats	State-run ridematching service	People will contact the contractor about joining an existing vanpool or creating a new vanpool. New vanpools require at least 6 people with 3 drivers (1 primary and 2 alternatives).	Group can call 511 to be matched to a vanpool or get information on starting a vanpool.	State-run ridematching service
Rules	n/a	n/a	Most of the agency rules apply to safe operation of the vehicles and submitting data in a timely manner. They can monitor speed and travel patterns through the use of GPS.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Each vanpool sets up their own rules	n/a	n/a

	King County, Seattle WA	Pace, Arlington IL	Ride Share, Hartford CT	MTA, Houston TX	UTA, Salt Lake City UT	LACMTA, Los Angeles CA	Community Transit, Snohomish County WA	Valley Metro, Phoenix AZ	Ride Match, San Francisco CA	Pierce County, Tacoma WA
ADA	Owns lift equipped vans	Provide lift-equipped vans when requested.	Have made ADA accommodations in the past. Also refer requester to paratransit.	Will help vendors purchase lift vehicle if requested	Will provide lift-equipped van if requested	Vendors must provide ADA compliant vehicles as needed	Owns lift equipped vans	Valley Metro owns two lift-equipped vans	Vendors must provide ADA compliant vehicles as needed	Owns lift equipped vans
Insurance	State Insurance Pool plus several $million reserve as backup	Insurance is provided through Pace	Insurance is provided through Ride Share. Vanpools operated in Connecticut and those operated out-of-state have a private provider.	Required minimum of $500,000 per accident	UTA insures the vehicles and uses a 3rd party for personal	Required minimum of $1 million accident	State Insurance Pool, has additional $60K reserve	Insurance is handled by the contractor (VPSI). Each vanpool is covered by an umbrella policy of $1,000,000	Handled by the vanpool owner (self, vendor, or employer)	State Insurance Pool
Marketing	No budget; relies on TMAs, non-profits and employer transportation coordinators	Pace outsources their advertising needs	Marketing is focused on employer outreach. This is conducted by the business development arm of Ride Share. They receive $1 million from the state to fund the marketing program	Master contractor provides	Uses cold calling, employee benefit fairs, billboards, and wrapped vans	Uses existing resources of the agency and private vendors	None	Marketing is primarily done through word of mouth and visibility of the vehicles. Employers will market to their employees	Print, electronic media, vanpool magnets, outreach	None
Incentives	None; lower cost than SOV use encourages participation	Guaranteed ride home, 300 personal miles per month for the driver, free fare for drivers, discounted fare for backup drivers, fuel, maintenance, and insurance included in fare	NYSDOT provides subsidy to vanpools traveling into New York to cover the additional insurance requirements, Drivers of large vans are not charged a fare, Participants may receive up to 4 emergency rides home, Cash reward for recruiting new, full-time riders, Cash incentive for reporting data on time, Reduced monthly fare when taking vacation or extended sick/family leave.	Provide $35 subsidy per each qualified rider	Fuel, maintenance, insurance, and loaner vehicles are included in the price	Subsidize 50% of vanpool cost up to $400	None	Drivers are not charged a fare, drivers received 300 personal miles per month, reimbursement for 2 taxi rides home per year for emergencies	$100 per seat lost per month up to 3 months, Startup subsidy	None
NTD Reporting	Paper-based survey sample	Driver keeps track of the data and submits the report monthly. This is primarily done through email, but they do receive some paper forms. Staff then enter the collected data.	Data is collected by the driver and submitted to Ride Share. University of South Florida has devised a system where they collect a sample of the data. Collected data is entered into proprietary software that makes submitting data to NTD simple.	Data is collected by the driver and entered online once monthly. Then Trapeze Ridepro is used to submit the data to NTD.	Vanpool keeps track on paper and submits via the web monthly	Manual – paper based with submission via eFax monthly	Excel for input and submission, data collected on paper daily in vehicles	At the beginning of the month the driver submits a seating chart for the entire month online. If a rider misses a day, the driver can go online and update the chart. Mileages are applied based on the predetermined route.	Do not currently report to NTD	Excel for input and submission, data collected on paper daily in vehicles

	King County, Seattle WA	Pace, Arlington IL	Ride Share, Hartford CT	MTA, Houston TX	UTA, Salt Lake City UT	LACMTA, Los Angeles CA	Community Transit, Snohomish County WA	Valley Metro, Phoenix AZ	Ride Match, San Francisco CA	Pierce County, Tacoma WA
Mileage Allocation	Each vanpool program in Washington State records and keeps its own miles, regardless of origin or destination UZA	All of the vans are operated by Pace and either start or end in the 6 county UZA associated with Chicago. All miles are allocated to this UZA	Miles are allocated to the UZA traveled to	Only one UZA	The area the van travels to gets all the mileage	Records miles by UZA in NTD, has interagency agreement with others to return UZA earnings to LACMTA	Each vanpool program in Washington State records and keeps its own miles, regardless of origin or destination UZA	Only one UZA	No mileage allocation occurs because San Francisco does not currently collect data for NTD.	Each vanpool program in Washington State records and keeps its own miles, regardless of origin or destination UZA
5307 Fund Use	Unknown	The regional transportation authority (RTA) receives the funding which is then dispersed to different agencies.	5307 funds go to the authorized recipient for each region. Ride Share does not receive any 5307 funding	5307 funding is used to support other transit investments, including new buses and rail infrastructure investment.	5307 fund come back to the authorized recipient and are then allocated to projects that are deemed "high priority" by the region.	Unknown	5307 funding is used to support other forms of transit at the agency, and does not support the vanpool program.	All 5307 funds come to the designated recipient who then uses a formula to distribute. The vanpool program does receive some 5307 funds back each year.	The region does not receive any 5307 funds for vanpool mileage because they don't report.	5307 funding is used to support other forms of transit at the agency, and does not support the vanpool program.
Owner-Operator	None	None	None	1 van	None	None	None	None	192 vans	None

Program History

Some of the vanpool programs interviewed (MTA Houston, King County Transit, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in San Francisco), had their genesis in the energy crisis of the 1970s, while others were created more recently out of a desire to generate new 5307 funding (Los Angeles County MTA). MTA Houston's vanpool program began when the area's major private employers organized their own employee vanpool programs in the late 1970s, but the agency's involvement with vanpooling did not begin until the mid-1980s. Today, many of these employer vanpools participate in the public vanpool program, alongside other providers such as VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare. King County Transit also began its vanpool program in the 1970s in response to the energy crisis, while many of the other vanpool programs in Washington State (Community Transit, Pierce County Transit) began in the mid-1980s in response to a statewide push to establish vanpool programs. Similar to King County Transit and MTA Houston, the San Francisco MTC started their program in the 1970s as a response to the energy crisis. That program began solely as a vanpool program but has grown to become a ride match program that includes carpools. The program does not currently report data to the NTD, but has attempted unsuccessfully to organize efforts to do so in the past. The program in Connecticut and Phoenix both started in the late 1980s/early 1990s. It is unclear what prompted each to start their program because of the age of the program and staff changes.

One of the relative newcomers, Los Angeles County MTA's program was created in 2007 after the agency determined that wanted to have a more organized, centralized public vanpool program in the region and submit vanpool data to NTD to garner 5307 earnings.

Who Runs the Programs/How the Programs Work

Most programs interviewed were public-private partnerships, with public agencies working with private vanpool leasing providers such as VPSI or Enterprise Rideshare to provide the vans and other services in exchange for some type of subsidy. At MTA Houston, the entire vanpool program is outsourced to a "master contractor" that has nine FTEs that deal with the day-to-day operational aspects of the program, as well as other senior, managerial and financial staff that assist with the program's operations. The master contactor is responsible for producing subcontracts with actual service providers, including VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare, as well as employer-based vanpools and other private providers. On the other hand, Los Angeles County MTA operates a "turnkey contract" directly with leasing providers VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare to provide vanpool service for the public program.

In Los Angeles, contractors VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare manage all aspect of the vanpool operations, including formation; all interpersonal and vehicle issues (including maintenance and acquisition); insurance; promoting the public program to their existing vanpools; and submitting vanpool applications for the public program. Los Angeles County MTA staff manage NTD reporting, overall program management, and employer-based and other marketing.

The Phoenix program has one full time public employee who oversees the program and manages the contractor. They use VPSI to handle all the day-to-day tasks associated with the program. VPSI sets up the vanpools, conducts the appropriate background checks, handles insurance and maintenance, and does the billing. The program in San Francisco is managed as part of a contract for the ride match service. The contractor uses fifteen FTEs who provide marketing and outreach, customer service, and information technology services. The contractor does not supply the vans and they do not have a contract with a provider to do so. Currently, they provide the interested parties with all the information about setting up a vanpool. This will include information about purchasing the van or contacting a leasing company and who they can contact.

All of the vanpool programs in Washington State that were interviewed (King County Transit, Community Transit and Pierce County Transit) are entirely public and operated by county-based transit agencies that manage of all aspects of the program (including insurance, vehicle acquisition and maintenance, NTD reporting, vanpool formation, safety and interpersonal issue management). These programs work to varying degrees with the major employers in their jurisdictions to facilitate ridematching services and vanpool formation. They all participate in a state-run ridematching database (http://www.rideshareonline.com/) and have very small marketing budgets. These programs rely heavily on word-of-mouth and long-term riders to maintain high occupancy and participation levels.

The program in Utah is similar. The vanpool program is operated entirely by the Utah Transit Authority. This program provides the vans, insurance, fuel cards, and maintenance to the participants. They also oversee the ride matching and administration of the program, including collecting NTD data through a web-based utility. The program in Chicago run by Pace is another publicly-run program, modeled after the King County program.

The Rideshare program in Connecticut is the only private, non-profit that was interviewed. They began as a broker for public transit, helping individuals by educating them on available transportation options. In the late 1980s Rideshare began their vanpool program, which came to be known as Easy Street in 1995. They provide vanpools in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The program operates using revenues generated through their collection of fares, private loans, and a small amount of CMAQ funding used for marketing.

Size of Programs (Vans and Employees)

The size of the programs ranged from just over 300 vans to over 1,000 vans. The actual number of employees needed to operate a public vanpool program varied widely among the agencies interviewed, due in part to the number of vanpools and due to the variety of ways in which the programs are managed. However, some size differences are somewhat inexplicable. For example, Community Transit in Snohomish County, WA, an agency with nearly 400 vans, has only five FTEs, while nearby Pierce County Transit has 11 FTEs for a program with 326 vans. Both programs operate very similarly and serve the suburban counties in the greater Seattle area. Community Transit did note that it receives some assistance with the program's financial aspects from the agency's financial staff. King County Transit, a large public program with over 1,000 vans employs 38 FTEs.

The UTA program would be considered a medium sized program with 525 vans. They currently utilize nine FTEs to run the program. This includes staff to provide management, administration, and maintenance. In addition the marketing and accounting functions are covered by staff who commit part of their time to the vanpool function. The program provides everything, including vehicles, insurance, and maintenance. The Pace program utilized seven FTEs. There are approximately 10 FTEs used to operate the vanpool program. It was difficult to provide an exact number because some staff have duties for other departments, and Pace also operates other van programs. The vanpool representatives, who deal with the vans on a day-to-day basis, handle about 50 vans each. This equates to six representatives based on the current program size of 278 vanpools. This number has dropped over the past couple years due to increases in unemployment associated with the current recession.

Public-private turnkey programs require fewer public staff, as many functions are handled entirely by the private providers, including insurance, vehicle acquisition and maintenance, and vanpool participant management (such as safety issues, driver training, and managing interpersonal issues). Los Angeles County MTA has only 2.5 FTEs, and a few other financial and managerial staff members who assist on an as-needed basis to manage a program with nearly 1,000 vanpools. When Los Angeles established their program in 2007, MTA staff analyzed the cost effectiveness of directly operating a vanpool program versus purchasing vanpool services through a turnkey agreement, and it was determined that a turnkey agreement would be more efficient and cost effective over the long term.

For the STAR Regional Vanpool program that has 708 vanpools, MTA Houston has only one FTE at the agency. The agency's vanpool program director is responsible for overall program management, managing the program's master contractor and ensuring accurate NTD reporting. However, all of the operational and subcontractor transportation providers are managed by MTA Houston's master contractor, which employs 9 FTEs to manage the program in addition to providing some higher-level managerial and financial staff to work on the program on an as-needed basis. The master contractor also subcontracts with other non-transportation providing firms for specific purposes, such as event management. These individuals are doing jobs that were formerly performed in-house at the agency. The master contractor for the vanpool program was procured under the agency's previous leadership which believed that outsourcing the vanpool program management would reduce the agency's costs, particularly its long-term pension obligations. Recent analysis by MTA Houston determined that the agency's vanpool program costs would not be different had the program never been outsourced, but the agency is continuing the outsourced program management paradigm for continuity purposes.

The program in San Francisco with MTC is similarly organized. There is one MTC staff member who oversees the contractor for the ride matching program. The contractor utilizes 15 FTEs to fulfill the contracted duties. This involves more than operation of the vanpool program and they could not provide further breakdown to assign a number of employees to the vanpool piece. The program includes approximately 600 vans, but does not oversee aspects related to collection of data for the NTD, vehicle maintenance, or insurance.

Valley Metro has one full time staff member who oversees the management of the vanpool program. Their contractor handles setting up vanpools, managing maintenance, providing insurances, and billing fares. Valley Metro has a separate contract to purchase vans. The Hartford Rideshare program currently has 531 vans. Since many of the staff work in various roles associated with the different services provided, they couldn't provide a figure on the number of staff used to run the vanpool program. There are 23 employees listed on their website who hold various positions. There are four staff assigned to senior management, four to customer service, four to finance, six to business development, and five to operations.

How the Programs are Funded

Most of the Washington State public programs rely heavily on farebox revenues for funding support. At King County Transit, farebox revenues generate $9 million annually, of which $5.8 million is spent on operations ($4.4 million in direct operational expenses, $1.8 million in administrative expenses) and $3 million is spent on capital expenses. These farebox revenues cover 100 percent of direct operational and capital expenses, while the agency typically subsidizes 50-70 percent of the program's administrative expenses in any given year. At Community Transit, 75 percent of the total program cost is recovered in farebox revenues, covering all expenses except for capital. The agency uses some federal grants and other funds to purchase replacement or expansion vans. While the Community Transit interviewee was not sure which Federal grants are used for their capital acquisitions, she believed that much of it came from 5307 funds. At Pierce County Transit, the vanpool program's direct operating costs are recovered entirely by farebox revenues; operating costs account for between 85 and 89 percent of the total program cost. Replacement vehicles are purchased with federal funds that require a match, with match funding from the Pierce Transit General Capital Fund. Washington DOT provides funding for expansion vans. The 5307 funding generated by the vanpool program (around $2 million) covers administrative and other costs.

The UTA program, similar to the Washington programs, relies heavily on the farebox revenue. Annually the program, receives approximately $600,000 in CMAQ funding from the Federal government. Additionally, they receive a portion of the funding that UTA collects as part of a local sales tax. The remainder of the program is funded through fares. Fares typically account for approximately $2 million in revenue.

Pace uses CMAQ funding to purchase the vehicles each year and relies on the fares collected to cover operating costs. The fare schedule is designed to recover the majority of the operating costs, but depending on the number of riders and distance traveled may not recover exactly 100 percent for an individual vanpool. Typically they do recover 100 percent of more of their operating costs through fares. In 2008 Pace received $2.1 million in revenue and incurred $1.9 million in expenses. This resulted in 110 percent farebox recovery rate. Similar to Pace, Valley Metro relies on passenger fares to cover the operating costs. Capital costs are funded through a combination of 5307 funds, surface transportation program funds, state public transportation funds, and JARC funds. Rideshare receives very little in public financing to fund their program. Operating costs are covered through passenger fares and approximately a million in CMAQ funding for marketing. Vans are purchased using private loans.

MTA Houston's STAR regional vanpool's funding has evolved over the years. Today, a variety of federal grant sources are used to provide rider subsidies and marketing and outreach efforts. Prior to 1996 the program was entirely supported by local funding generated from a one percent local sales tax dedicated to the transit agency. In 1996 the agency began receiving CMAQ funding for its vanpool program, but at the time it agreed that CMAQ funding would only be used for program expansion and that local funding would be continued at the same level that it would have otherwise been. Since CMAQ can only be used for operations for the first three years it is received, MTA Houston then added FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) grants to provide additional operational support. Today, CMAQ funds are dedicated for items for which it can be 100 percent allocated, such as marketing. Around two years ago the agency started using FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant funding to lease vans for reverse commute routes. MTA Houston does not use the 5307 funding generated by its vanpool operations for the vanpool program, but instead uses these funds for bus replacement and expansion and building rail.

The San Francisco program is funded through federal, and local sources. Currently MTC gets annual funding through the CMAQ program. They also receive $1 million in annual funding from their local air district. The air districts receive funding through a license plate fee. Annually, this program operates using approximately $3 million.

Los Angeles County MTA uses a variety of local and federal grants, including Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (5316), to provide startup funding for the vanpool program. The 5307 funding generated by the vanpool program now supports the program's rider subsidies.

Van Ownership and Maintenance

In Washington State, all vans are owned and maintained by the local transit agencies (King County Transit, Community Transit and Pierce Transit). King County Transit typically sells a vanpool vehicle after it has been in service for six years, when 30-40 percent of the vehicle's value is remaining. Unlike other transit agencies that sell vehicles only when their value is fully depreciated, the funds generated from the sale of a vehicle with some remaining value are reinvested in the purchase of new vanpool vehicles, reducing overall capital costs for the program, as well as reducing the maintenance costs inherent in the upkeep of older vehicles. King County Transit also has several large, collective contracts with vehicle maintenance providers through the metropolitan Seattle area. These large contracts with maintenance providers generate a significant discount on vanpool maintenance costs and also allow vanpool drivers to take vehicles there to be serviced at a location convenient to them. Community Transit and Pierce Transit both provide in-house maintenance for their vehicles at their transit maintenance facilities.

The UTA program also owns and maintains all the program vehicles. U.S. Magnesium also owns and operates 19 vans that are not part of the UTA program and therefore not included in the reporting to NTD. While the program does have some maintenance staff, the majority of the maintenance is done through agreements with local vendors. Scheduling of maintenance activities such as preventive maintenance work is the responsibility of the vanpool driver. There are loaner vans available for use when the primary van is in the shop. Rideshare also owns all their vehicles and maintenance is included in the fares paid by vanpool participants. Hartford Rideshare keeps track of mileage and will notify drivers when it is time to schedule preventive maintenance. Rideshare asks that all drivers schedule their maintenance requests through them. This ensures that an approved vendor is used and payment and accounting are handled according to their preference.

Pace owns all the vehicles in the program and pays for the associated maintenance. It is the responsibility of each driver to ensure that vehicles receive scheduled maintenance in addition to handling any non-schedule maintenance issues. Pace uses LeasePlan, a fleet and vehicle management company, to handle the administration of the maintenance program. LeasePlan issues each driver a card that is used to account for payments associated with vehicle maintenance. LeasePlan has approved vendors that drivers can take their vehicles to for maintenance. LeasePlan then submits a bill to Pace for maintenance costs.

In the turnkey-contractor programs, only the actual private providers and owners of the vans handle vehicle maintenance. However, public program participation does come with maintenance and vehicle age requirements; for example, at the Los Angeles County MTA no vehicle that has been in service for more than three years can be assigned to a vanpool participating in the public program. Valley Metro has a contractor who oversees the maintenance program for the vehicles, while the vehicles are owned by Valley Metro. The contractor maintains a list of approved vendors for maintenance and will assist vanpool drivers in scheduling maintenance. The contractor oversees the preventive maintenance program, ensuring that vehicles are serviced at regular intervals.

The San Francisco program has no responsibilities associated with vehicle ownership or maintenance because they don't provide any of the vehicles used. Currently the program is a mix of privately-owned vans, employer owned vans, and leased vans (VPSI/Enterprise). They leave the choice of vehicle ownership up to the person organizing the vanpool. They will provide contact information about the different leasing options but do not make a recommendation or have a contract with a single operator. Since they don't own any of the vehicles, maintenance of the vehicles is the responsibility of the party who owns the vehicle. This will vary depending on the ownership.

Rules: Background Checks, Adherence to Program Rules, Adding New Vanpool Members

Background Checks

Background checks of drivers and passengers are rare, however all programs or program contractors require driving record checks for all vanpool drivers. MTA Houston's private providers require credit checks of drivers as well, and also periodically re-check the driving records of the drivers through the vanpool providers. Hartford Rideshare rechecks their driver's records on an annual basis and may in some cases require more frequent checking based on the individual driver's record. They also ask that each driver report changes to their driving record between the checks. This prevents the agency from having to run criminal background checks on all of the riders, as the parents take full responsibility for any harm that results from their child riding on a vanpool. At Pierce Transit, Valley Metro, and UTA, credit checks are required for all volunteer bookkeepers, since they are collecting fares from vanpool participants. In San Francisco they also require a medical examination in order to meet California state law. This requirement mandates that they driver must keep a physician- signed card on their person when driving the van. MTC provides reimbursement for medical exam costs up to $75.

The Pace program has some of the most stringent checks required for drivers. Drivers must submit to a driving record check, a credit check, a background check, and a physical. The physical is a Pace requirement that is modeled after the state DOT regulations pertaining to commercial drivers. These requirements are in place to ensure they have quality drivers behind the wheel and to also reduce their costs associated with liability. Drivers are also required to attend a day-long driving course. As a result of the requirements and the added responsibility associated with driving, Pace does not charge a fare to drivers as an incentive to get people to become drivers.

Adherence to Program Rules

Adherence to program rules is mainly monitored by riders reporting safety or other program rule violations to the program administrators directly in the case of public programs, or to designated points of contact at the private vanpool providers.

MTA Houston requires that if a rider wants to bring their child on board a vanpool that the parents sign an affidavit accepting responsibility for the child and confirming that the child will never ride on the vanpool alone. Many of the vanpools in MTA Houston's program operate in the region's HOV lanes and park in designated park and ride lots, both of which are operated by the transit authority and patrolled by the transit agency's police force.

At Community Transit, adherence to program rules is monitored in several different ways. Vanpool coordinators deal with any vanpool-related complaints that come into the transit agency's customer service hotline, including issues such as unsafe driving practices on the vanpools that could be violations of the programs rules. They also monitor parking of the vehicles.

MTC does not have many program rules. They will deactivate the toll transponder that is given as an incentive if the vanpool does not maintain a current rider list with MTC. UTA similarly will suspend the use of the fuel card by vanpools that are not submitting payment on time, or reporting figures monthly

Hartford Rideshare not only relies on riders and the public to report inappropriate driving behavior of their vehicles, but also has GPS on each vehicle. The use of GPS allows them to track locations as well as speed of the vehicles. Rideshare's staff provide extensive assistance in handling conflicts or complaints. Complaints made by the public will always receive a call back as a follow up. In addition, when complaints or conflicts occur between riders they will conduct a thorough review of the complaint, including interviews of the involved parties as well as vanpool riders who may have witnessed the event.

Requirement to Display Program Logo

In terms of requirements that vanpools are labeled as part of a program, California state law mandates that vanpools be labeled as such. MTC provides a magnet to owner-operated vanpools and employer programs that so desire. Programs such as VPSI include the labeling as part of their vehicle graphics.

UTA feels that the branding of their vehicles also adds an element of public enforcement. At MTA Houston, all of the non-employer owned vans have the program's logo and phone number prominent displayed, and the program receives calls from the public about non law-abiding and speeding vanpools.

Adding New Vanpool Members

All of the programs interviewed strictly enforce the requirement that vanpools add new members when requested, but some programs also permit some leeway in establishing when a van is full. Pierce Transit allows for some extra room in vehicles for passenger comfort, for example a 15-passenger van may be approved for 13-passenger maximum. UTA sets a minimum number of passengers each van type must carry and leaves it up to the individual vanpools to determine how many people beyond that number they would like to carry. The van costs the group the same regardless of whether they carry the minimum or the maximum. It is the individual cost that decreases as more people are added. A similar position is taken at Valley Metro and Rideshare. In instances where the minimum isn't being met and someone is trying to get into the vanpool they will remind the existing members that this is a public vanpool and rules pertaining to discrimination apply. At MTA Houston the only issue regarding adding new members to vanpools comes from employer-based vanpools, as in general the private firms are fairly concerned about limiting the presence of non-firm employees on their vanpools. One employer requires that any inquiries about open seats on their vans first pass through a corporate transportation manager before any non-firm employee can join their vanpool. This is largely due to a concern by firms in Houston's very competitive market for energy technology talent; firms are afraid that vanpoolers that share a van with individuals from competing firms may share sensitive corporate information or be more likely to receive job offers from competing firms. This gives corporate transportation managers a strong incentive to ensure that their vans remain full at all times.

ADA Compliance

To meet ADA requirements, all programs either own a lift-equipped vehicle or have an established agreement or policy that they will procure one upon request. For example, MTA Houston has an agreement with their providers that if requested they will provide a lift-equipped vehicle within a reasonable time period. This has never happened to-date. However, should a lift-equipped vehicle be requested, the agency anticipates needing to pay the extra cost of such a vehicle and to help the provider procure it. Community Transit owns two lift-equipped vans. Most of the time neither of these vans are in use, however currently one is being used. Community Transit has a verbal agreement with other vanpool programs in the state to share their lift-equipped vehicles as needed, as not all vanpool programs in the state own lift-equipped vans. Pierce Transit and Valley Metro also own lift-equipped vans. Pace provides conversions for vans that are needed to meet the ADA requirement.

Insurance

MTA Houston requires a minimum level of $500,000 of insurance per accident combined for bodily injury and property damage. However, many of Houston's employer-based vanpool fleets have higher insurance requirements than the public program, and will not provide a transportation subsidy or van unless they are assured that the van their employees are riding in meets those requirements. Some employer-based vanpools have even more strict risk management requirements. For instance, one firm installed a vehicle speed-monitoring device that records speeds in all of their vans. Los Angeles County MTA requires a minimum of $5,000,000 per accident for bodily injury and property damage, and a minimum of $1,000,000 in commercial automobile liability coverage for participants in the vanpool program. Valley Metro's vanpool insurance is handled by the contractor. VPSI provides each vanpool with an umbrella policy that covers up to $1,000,000 per incident for collision and liability. MTC in San Francisco does not deal with the provision of insurance. Each van must meet a state minimum prior to approval as a vanpool, and leaves it up to the individual groups to determine how this will be handled based on the owner situation.

In Washington State, all transit agencies are covered by the Washington State Transit Insurance Pool (http://www.wstip.org/default.aspx), but many of the agencies carry additional insurance for their vanpool programs. Community Transit carries an additional $60,000 in insurance for underinsured vanpools and 100 percent cover the vanpool driver and riders. However, should a vanpool driver do something with the vehicle that is against the program rules or cause an at-fault accident, they must use their personal insurance. King County Transit maintains a reserve of several million dollars to backup the state insurance. Pierce Transit requires that all vanpool drivers provide their personal vehicle insurance cards as proof that they are insurable. The Pierce Transit vanpool program was originally self-insured, but it transitioned to the more cost effective state insurance pool. UTA provides insurance as part of the program. The vehicles are covered under the agency policy for the transit vehicle fleet. They also maintain a third-party insurer for personal property. This provider was recently changed in the fall of 2009 and they have been pleased with the new provider. Insurance in the Pace program is covered under the agency's policy, which the interviewee thought was for $5 million per incident.

Hartford Rideshare, which operates in different states, has different insurance costs associated with their vans depending on the state each is operated. Vans operated in New York have a higher insurance requirement. NYSDOT provides a subsidy to offset the additional expenses associated with the higher insurance costs.

Marketing, Advertising, Branding

All of the vanpool programs interviewed have their vans branded with the logo of their program. The exceptions to this are in Houston and San Francisco. In Houston, the regional vanpool program logo and number appears on the non-employer owned vans, but does not appear on employer-owned vans, even though all of the employer-based vanpools are in the public program. There are vans in the public program owned by employers, but these vans remain branded with the logo of the firm that owns them and not the vanpool program. In San Francisco, most of the owner-operated vanpools utilize a branded magnet that meets the state requirement for marking vanpools. The leasing companies have their own branding and in many cases the employer operates van do as well.

In Los Angeles, the marketing plan for the vanpool program was designed to take advantage of existing resources both in terms of the capacity of the agency and in leveraging the private vendors to promote the program. Private vendors VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare advertise and promote the vanpool program to their existing vanpools. MTA's marketing department has also done radio ads, van wraps to promote the program and provided gas cards as short-term incentive for new enrollees. The program also had a targeted media push when it launched, and is included in the agency's annual campaign. In Houston, the vanpool program's master contractor employs three people to provide employer-outreach services, and subcontracts with marketing and design firms on an as needed basis. The agency's marketing budget is funded by grants, including CMAQ. San Francisco's marketing is primarily focused on employer outreach. They do have marketing staff, but commented that many of their print materials have remained unchanged recently. The bulk of this work is provided by the contractor. UTA promotes their service through attending employee benefit fairs, bill boards, and van wraps. Valley Metro relies heavily on word of mouth between vanpoolers as well as employers promoting programs to their employees. They feel the use of their logo and phone number on the vans also aids in a passive marketing campaign. They do not rely heavily on media for marketing the program.

The Washington State vanpool programs do not have marketing, advertising or branding budgets. King County Transit leverages the activities of area Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), other related non-profits, and employer transportation coordinators to do marketing for them. For example, if the vanpool administrators at King County want to advertise a specific promotion, they'll create a flyer and email to this group of organizations for distribution. At Community Transit and Pierce Transit, vanpool information is included in general marketing materials produced by marketing departments, but both agencies they have found very little need for formal marketing and instead rely heavily on word-of-mouth recommendations. Both agencies make site visits to major employers to promote the vanpool program. Pierce Transit strongly relies on these sites visits, while Community Transit does not do employer site visits often.

Financial or Other Incentives to Vanpools

Los Angeles County MTA subsidizes 50 percent of a vanpool's monthly leasing cost, up to $400. For example, a vanpool with a $750 monthly lease receives a $350 subsidy. This level of subsidy is generally enough to induce participation in the program, in addition to any employer provided benefits or incentives to participate in vanpooling. In California, large employers are subject by law to air quality mitigation requirements and receive very specific SOV commute reduction targets. To meet these goals most large employers offer an array of benefits and incentives, including providing contributions for public transportation costs. Some Los Angeles area employers offer the pre-tax commuter benefit, but not nearly to the scale that Federal workers receive. For workers that receive the pre-tax benefit the total cost of vanpooling may be nearly free, but in most cases the employer-provided benefit just reduces out-of-pocket expenses.

MTC in San Francisco provides a couple of different financial incentives to its vanpools. Those that register with the ride match program and keep a current rider list on file can receive a transponder that provides them with reduced tolls. MTC also provides a startup subsidy that amounts to $300 every three months up to $900. They will also provide a lost seat subsidy of $100 per seat lost for up to three months. Many of these subsidies provided are done so with gas cards. Other incentives offered through the use of vanpools in the region can be reduced parking fees or parking for free. These incentives vary from locality to locality within the San Francisco area.

In Houston, the STAR Regional vanpool program currently offers a per-van subsidy based on the number of qualified riders. A qualified rider must be a full-time rider that has 12 or more roundtrips per month (including excused absences such as vacation time, sick days or business travel). Each qualified van receives $35 per rider per month towards the total cost of the vanpool, so a vanpool with 5 riders would have a $175 subsidy while one with 15 riders would have a $525 subsidy. The subsidy is provided directly to the vendor providing their van. The average subsidy a van receives is $350. The interviewee would not recommend a subsidy system based on the number of riders, as it becomes very complicated during the billing process. They have also had instances where vans have reported fake riders to increase the subsidy amount.

In Washington State incentives and subsidies are not offered by the vanpool programs, as the cost of vanpooling is often lower than using an SOV and is the main source of attraction for vanpool participants. However, the Washington State vanpool programs have offered promotions to attract new riders. The agencies have found that using gift cards to attract new vanpool riders has been successful. In past promotions a $100 gift card was given to all new vanpool drivers and new riders that rode for three consecutive months. These promotions have been discontinued due to the general financial difficulty faced by all of the local transit agencies and the State DOT. The Washington State DOT provided funding through a grant for these gift card promotions in the past.

UTA views incentives similarly. They feel the service they are providing, which includes the vehicles, maintenance, insurances, and fuel is a huge perk when the cost of split amongst the parties in the vanpool. They do offer a the opportunity to win a $25 gift card through a drawing for those vanpools that submit their monthly report by the fifth of the month.

Pace provides guaranteed ride home service to all riders. The remainder of the incentives provided are directed towards the driver and backup driver. The driver of the vanpool gets 300 personal miles per month in addition to not having to pay a fare. The backup driver receives a discount on their fare. These incentives were created to attract vanpool drivers. The requirements to become a driver as well as the responsibility of driving and keeping track of the data were viewed as reasons people did not want to be vanpool drivers.

Valley Metro allows drivers to use the van for up to 300 personal miles. Drivers may not be charged a fare to be part of the vanpool at the discretion of the vanpool. This is a similar benefit provided to vanpool drivers in the Rideshare program who drive the larger vans. Drivers who drive the larger vans also receive 140 personal miles each month. Those who drive a minivan receive 250 personal miles. Included in the fare of the vehicle is maintenance and insurance costs as well as emergency roadside assistance. There are loaner vans available while vehicles are having maintenance completed. There are cash bonuses available for referring riders as well as submitting data on-time. The Rideshare program also allows part time riders. This has come as a result of more people telecommuting. The fact that fares are charged individually allows them to compute part time fares. The program also provided a guaranteed ride home benefit of four emergency rides home for full time riders and two to part time.

NTD Collection and Reporting

In Los Angeles, vanpools submit their mileage, hours, passengers and cost (fuel, parking, tolls) data to MTA on a monthly basis, and then MTA remits the van's subsidy to their private vendor (VPSI or Enterprise). The vanpoolers pay their reduced fares directly to the private vendor providing their van. Los Angeles is using a paper-based system to collect NTD data from the vanpools that requires volunteer bookkeepers to record rider and route information daily on a paper format. The bookkeepers then submit their paper-based reports monthly via eFax, a system that sends faxes via email in pdf format to the agency. The use of eFax helps the agency meet their requirements to maintain electronic as well as paper files. However, it has not reduced the significant time vanpool program staff spends on dealing with errors and missing information on the monthly reports. A large chunk of the time of the as-needed ½ FTE position is devoted to following up with people about incomplete or delinquent NTD reports. By the due date for NTD reporting there are usually 120-180 outstanding reports. In addition, a good portion of the reports that were submitted on-time are incomplete, illegible, not signed, they can't tell who it is from, were faxed on the wrong side, or have some other math or recording error. One of the lessons learned for the agency was to provide extra support to the vanpool drivers and bookkeepers, as these people are volunteers and not transit professionals they are not accustomed to reporting and recording the required information. LACMTA now provides training to these individuals to familiarize them with the NTD reporting process. LACMTA is hoping to transition to an electronic system in order to both reduce the time that staff spends resolving issues on the reports and to increase accuracy and ease of reporting. The agency believes that it will take about a year to transition to electronic reporting, and that it will be a big learning curve for the vanpool participants. By contrast, nearby Orange County Transit Authority started their program with an online reporting system and has not encountered any rider complaints or difficulties.

Houston MTA uses Trapeze Ridepro for vanpool tracking, ridematching and monthly NTD reporting (roster, ridership, mileage, etc.). When a route is created it is mapped in Ridepro for mileage, and each time the roster is updated the route is re-checked. Through the billing process, information about the cost of fuel, the lease and maintenance is captured. When the program first began recording vanpool data they did not accurately capture all of the costs of the vanpool, so they were significantly underreporting the costs of each vanpool. On a daily basis the only thing that vanpool participants need to do is to check-off who is riding in the vanpool and then they enter this information online once a month. All of the other information required for NTD reporting is captured through Ridepro, the providers, or through the billing process. On an annual basis the program does an inventory of all of the vehicles in the program. The master contractor employs a half-time research analyst that works only on NTD reporting.

King County Transit uses an FTA-approved sample survey to collect data for NTD, as the agency refuses to have someone need to check who is riding everyday and strongly feel that this is too much of a bureaucratic approach. They have also had talks with AVEGO about possible use of their system and are planning to do a limited demonstration with it early next year. The AVEGO system offers route map optimization and automated NTD reporting, which would largely eliminate the burden of NTD reporting. Hartford Rideshare also only collects a sample of the total number of vanpools data to report to NTD. They have created an approved methodology for sampling the data in cooperation with the University of South Florida. Drivers who have been requested to submit data as part of the sample collect their data manually and submit it to Rideshare either electronically or as a hard copy. The data is then entered into their proprietary software, which keeps track of other information relating to the vanpools. The organization and accounting of the data in their program makes for an easy submission to NTD.

At Community Transit, a vanpool's bookkeeper will use a clipboard and a paper form to collect the required data for NTD on a daily basis. The vanpool bookkeeper then inputs this data into an Excel version of the form, which was created for Community Transit about 18 months ago by a vanpooler that is employed by Microsoft. The Excel form automatically computes items such as passenger miles, and has proven very useful in limiting the number of errors in the form and helping to collect the information in a uniform and efficient way. The vanpool coordinators "audit" each other's NTD reports and forms by each checking 10 of the monthly vanpool reports of another vanpool coordinator to ensure consistency and accuracy. Timely NTD reporting is not a major issue. If there is a particular bookkeeper that has issues filling out or submitting the NTD forms they are provided with further training by Community Transit, and are replaced if they cannot fulfill the bookkeeper duties.

Pierce County Transit requires information for NTD reporting to be recorded on paper everyday by trained bookkeepers riding in each vanpool. At the end of each month the bookkeepers are responsible for completing a two-page report based on their paper records and transferring their group's information into an Excel spreadsheet. The bookkeepers then forward their reports to eight designated volunteer managing bookkeepers that each manages 38 vanpool groups. The managing vanpool bookkeepers then input the data from their 38 vanpool groups into a single Excel spreadsheet, and they then forward this spreadsheet to Pierce County Transit vanpool coordinators. The vanpool coordinators then combine the information from the eight spreadsheets received from the managing bookkeepers into a single spreadsheet that contains all the NTD data for the agency for the monthly reporting period.

UTA's minimum requirement is that data be submitted monthly. They do recommend that the bookkeeper keep track of the required information on a daily basis to ensure accurate record keeping. They allow bookkeepers to submit the monthly report through mail, fax, or online through a web application. They prefer use of the web application because does not require the data to be entered into the system by a staff member. They reported few issues with getting data reported in a timely fashion. As mentioned above, they do offer the opportunity to receive an incentive if the reports are submitted by the fifth of the month.

Drivers are required to submit data on a monthly basis to Pace. There is a fee of $7 associated with submitting data late. Information is collected and recorded by the driver and then the forms are submitted to Pace. Most drivers submit forms through email, but there are some who still mail them. Pace prefers to receive them electronically. Pace staff must then take the data received and enter it into their database. Data submitted by drivers is checked against mileages received from the fuel and maintenance vendor as well as through spot checks of the van done by Pace staff. Valley Metro collects data from their drivers at the beginning of the month. Each month the driver submits a ridership chart online. Any changes that occur can be made online by the driver prior to the end of the month. Mileage is pulled from the route information kept by Valley Metro. In addition, every week a vanpool is selected randomly to complete a survey to ensure proper reporting is occurring.

Division of Mileage For NTD Reporting

The Los Angeles County MTA vanpool program has vans that travel through eight Urbanized Areas (UZAs), and the vehicle miles are reported by UZA in NTD. About half of the vanpools in the program start and end in Los Angeles County, and the UZA boundaries closely resemble those of the county. When a new route enters into the program the program's staff do a GIS overlay to determine the percentage of the route's miles by UZA, and then allocate miles to each UZA based on this. As the UZA allocation determines 5307 earnings, they have an interagency agreement that 5307 funds generated from vanpools will be returned to the agency that reported them. There is one UZA that Los Angeles County vanpools travel through that has not signed the interagency agreement, and this UZA is receiving the 5307 funds earned by Los Angeles County MTA vanpools. No Los Angeles MTA vanpools pass through "grey areas" that are not a part of a defined UZA. The vast majority of Los Angeles County MTA vanpool program miles reported by the agency, 93 percent, travel only in their own UZA. Hartford Rideshare has determined the UZAs each route travels through using Census data and devised formulas for splitting the miles between them.

In Houston the entire area serviced by the vanpool program is covered in a single UZA, or is not part of a UZA, so there are no issues faced in dividing 5307 funding. This is the case for Pace in Chicago as well. In Washington State each county-based transit agency in the greater Seattle area has their own vanpools program, and each vanpool program records miles traveled in their vanpools entirely for their own agency and county, regardless of the origin or destination of the vanpool. UTA assigns the mileage a vanpool travels to the area the vanpool is traveling to regardless of the fact that UTA operates all the vans. The majority of vans operated are traveling to the Salt Lake City area.

Use of Vanpool Generated 5307 Funds

In Utah, Los Angeles, Houston and in Washington State the 5307 funds that are generated by the vanpool program are included in the larger 5307 fund pot received for the region. The funds are then divided based on project needs. This is one of the reasons that MTC does not collect vanpool data for the San Francisco area. 5307 funds are not a return to source fund. The fear is that vanpool data would be collected, but none of the funding received would be returned to the program. Another fear voiced is that the vanpool program may “take” 5307 funding from other sources. These are issues that have not been resolved and have led to the region not reporting vanpool data to NTD. 5307 funds generated by the Pace vanpool program come back into the larger regional 5307 funding pool. Funds are received by the regional transportation authority and are then dispersed to individual agencies. It is unclear how the funding amounts are determined. Valley Metro is one of a few agencies that receive a portion of the 5307 funds earned back. Funding is received by the authorized recipient for the Phoenix region and then dispersed using a formula. Rideshare does not receive any 5307 funds. They feel that contributing their miles to NTD in exchanges for 5307 funds benefits transportation projects in the region’s they operate. As an agency that seeks to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles as part of their mission the feel the return of the funds to local transportation projects helps fulfill that mission.

Independent Owner-Operators

San Francisco has 192 owner-operated vanpools. However, since they don’t currently report to NTD this is not an issue. They did voice a concern about getting this group to report, but have not invested time in determining how this would be accomplished since its not a reality yet. The region also has 142 employer-operated vans. Getting these programs to report to NTD may also be an issue if the region ever comes to a consensus on whether they would like to report to NTD.

MTA Houston currently has a single owner-operator van in its fleet, along with five employer-based vans that together provide approximately 100 vans. Houston is interested in incorporating more owner-operator vans into their program, and believes that it would be possible to structure their participation in such a way so that they can comply with the program rules. The current owner-operator van in MTA Houston’s program is a “pilot” for including owner-operators in the program, which the agency views as a flexible way to increase the capacity of the program. However, MTA Houston is concurrently exploring ways to collapse their employer-based vanpools into one of their leasing agents. Prior to the onset of the recession and job losses, the program was financially unable to meet the demand for its expansion, since under its current subsidy model the more successful it is the more it costs. It is easier to control costs through vans that are centrally leased and billed, so there is an advantage in their system to working with larger van providers over smaller providers, including owner-operators.

6 CONCLUSIONS

There are clear differences in program organizational structure and operations between publically operated vanpool programs and turnkey-contractor programs. While the research did not uncover a program that had the anywhere near the number of private participants that a program in Northern Virginia would have, some key themes, key findings, and best practices were uncovered. However, because the makeup of the vans in Northern Virginia would differ so greatly than the other programs already in existence, this program will have to be innovative in its design.

Key Themes

- Organizational Structure: Public programs require more staff than turnkey-contractor programs.
- Program Rules/ADA Compliance: Programs rely on agreements with individual vanpools or van providers to follow program rules, including ADA Compliance, and to confirm that program rules are followed. There is little active monitoring of adherence to program rules.
- Most programs rely heavily on passenger fares to fund operations. CMAQ funds appear to be a primary source of capital funding. Other funds used include 5307 earnings and local taxes.
- The more automated and tech-focused an NTD reporting process is, the less staff time it takes to compile and confirm the data.
- Most vanpool programs rely heavily on word of mouth and visibility. Branding of the vans is seen as a major marketing tool. Many agencies target major employers in their region to create new vanpools.

Contrasts and Issues

Organizational Structure

- The vanpool programs interviewed have a variety of organizational structures:
  - Five of the programs interviewed operated a completely public operation and had agency staff handling everything from setting up the vanpool to providing oversight of maintenance activities.
  - One organization interviewed (The Rideshare Company in Hartford) is a private non-profit that manages all activities of its vanpool program in-house, similar to the public program.
  - The other four programs interviewed maintain a small public agency staff (1-3 employees) to manage the program, coupled with outsourcing the operational aspects of the program either to a "master contractor" (Houston, San Francisco), or to a vanpool leasing firm (Los Angeles, Phoenix). The tasks assigned to each contractor varied depending on the level of capability of the public agency to handle program operations.
- Staffing sizes varied between the agencies interviewed. Some agencies had what could be considered skeletal staff sizes to handle their vanpool program regardless of the size of the program. Programs that had larger staff sizes typically had more individuals dedicated to customer service or business development/outreach.

Best Practices: Each of the organizational structures has pros and cons. In each case, the structure that is currently there seems to work for the agency at hand. While public-private partnerships tend to require fewer public staff, and therefore a lower public investment, it does take some of the program control away from the public agency and can limit the options that are available, particularly as it relates to the possibility of owner-operators participating in the program.

Program Rules/ADA Compliance

- Most agencies have very few program rules and leave rules associated with individual vanpools up to each group. Agency rules primarily focus on how payments are made, when and how to report data, and requirements to become a vanpool.
- Most programs only require a driving record check of their drivers. Some agencies do require credit checks for the individual collecting fares. Two agencies required physicals for the driver, and in one instance there was a background check as well as training courses required.
- Most agencies enforce their program rules through monitoring by vanpool riders and the public-at-large. Most vehicles are branded and give the public a number of ways to contact the agency if they observe a vanpool operating in an unsafe manner. One agency equipped their vehicles with GPS and could monitor actual vehicle movements and speeds.
- All programs enforce the rule of adding riders requesting to enter a vanpool if a seat is available. Few programs mandate that the vans be full to capacity as long as the minimum threshold is met and the vehicle fare is being paid. Some programs cited concerns about adding vanpool riders from competing firms when the vanpool was organized by a single employer. Fears about sharing corporate practices or "headhunting" were listed.
- All programs adhere to ADA guidelines. Most programs didn't have a current need for a lift equipped van, and therefore didn't own one. They responded that they would accommodate request and purchase a vehicle if necessary and when requested. In Washington State, the agencies share a lift-equipped van between them and haven't had an issue where the van was needed by more than one at a time.

Best Practices: It is the best, and the common practice, for programs to limit the number of rules for vanpools, so as not to discourage participation. It is also critical that the programs follow the public aspect of the program, i.e., offering available seats to persons who want to participate in the program, and following ADA requirements. While not many programs require it, the best practice in the agencies interviewed is one in which both a driving record check and background check is conducted on the drivers.

Marketing

- Half of the agencies interviewed have no formal marketing budget or activities (including all of the Washington State programs and Valley Metro). These programs embed vanpool marketing into the overall Transportation Demand Management (TDM) outreach activities of their agency.
- Ride Share, MTA Houston, UTA, Pace and San Francisco do advertise their programs in print and electronic media. All of these programs except Pace also conduct employer-outreach activities.
- To launch its vanpool program Los Angeles MTA conducted a successful, highly visible media campaign to attract existing vanpools to join the new public program.

- Unified vanpool program branding, having an identifiable program logo, website, and branded vanpool vehicles, was standard at all agencies interviewed.

Best Practices: The ideal way to grow the vanpool program is to have a multi-faceted, comprehensive marketing program that includes inclusion of the program in the overall Transportation Demand Management (TDM) outreach activities of the agency; conducting media advertisement, particularly at program launch; maintaining an informative and easy to understand program website; and using branding of the vehicles and the program.

Subsidies

- A true monthly subsidy was offered by only two of the programs interviewed: MTA Houston and Los Angeles County MTA. Los Angeles County MTA will subsidize half of the cost of a van, up to $400. MTA Houston offers a flat subsidy per van of $35 per rider, but does not recommend this system of subsidy as it is difficult to manage on the accounting side and prone to fraud.
- The publically operated programs and the non-profit Ride Share do not offer long-term subsidies for the vans, but do offer various promotions to attract new vanpoolers, including gift cards, gas cards and cash rewards for recruiting new vanpoolers. One program offers cash incentives for reporting NTD data correctly and on time. Other benefits offered included guaranteed ride home services and temporary financial support for new and struggling vanpools.

Best Practices: Simple cash subsidies per seat appear to work well in the turnkey-contractor programs. Other forms of subsidies in the form of promotions to attract new vanpoolers, rewards for data submission, and other benefits to vanpoolers have worked well for recruiting new riders in markets where vanpooling is highly cost effective, even with limited or no employer subsidy. While true, this would not necessarily be applicable in the Northern Virginia region due to the high level of federal transit benefits.

NTD Reporting

- NTD data collection practices varied among the programs interviewed, but there were three overarching methods for collecting the data: sample survey, daily paper form collection with monthly paper form submission, and daily paper form collection with monthly electronic (excel-based or web-based) submission.
    - King County and Hartford Rideshare do not collect data daily, but instead use an FTA approved sample survey. This method results in a smaller amount of data collected, but no significant error in reporting accuracy.
    - Most of the vanpools programs interviewed have their vanpools record ridership and mileage data daily on a paper form. Vanpools in these programs submit this data to the agency monthly. Some programs require submission of the data either in a paper format (Los Angeles MTA, Pace) or in an excel format (the Washington State programs) that is submitted via email or fax. UTA, Valley Metro and MTA Houston use a secure website into which vanpoolers enter their ridership data, eliminating the need for staff to spend time compiling data from individual forms. Valley Metro and MTA Houston do not require the submission of daily mileage information, but instead calculate the mileage based on the daily vanpool route mileage submitted each month. At Valley

Metro at the beginning of the month the driver submits a ridership chart of daily riders online, and will modify this chart throughout the monthly as roster changes occur. Each weekly Valley Metro selects a vanpool at random to submit a survey of daily activity. This is used as a check to ensure proper reporting is being done.

- Allocation of miles to a particular UZA was only an issue for agencies that had vans traveling to more than one agency. In those instances, the allocation was widely different. For example, UTA allocates the miles to the UZA to which the van travels. Los Angeles and Hartford Rideshare both allocate miles based on the percentage of total route miles that a van travels in an UZA.

Best Practices: None of the agencies interviewed used a particularly easy approach to collecting NTD data. Given the labor intensive processes employed by all programs interviewed, an FTA-approved sampling plan does allow for less manual data entry; but it can be more prone to error than every day data collection. However, the implementation of data collection technologies is imminent in many of the agencies and would be a better approach than either type of manual data collection that is the norm in most agencies today.

Owner-Operators

- The only program interviewed that incorporates a large number of owner-operators is San Francisco, which does not report to NTD. As mentioned above, San Francisco does not report to NTD due to the fact that it has not been able to overcome disagreements about the regional division of 5307 funding)=. San Francisco staff are concerned about how to get “buy in” from existing owner-operator vanpools to report data and become part of a larger program, should the program begin to report to NTD.
- MTA Houston currently has a single owner-operator van in its fleet, along with five employer-based vans that together provide approximately 100 vans. Houston is interested in incorporating more owner-operator vans into their program, and believes that it would be possible to structure their participation in such a way so that they can comply with the program rules. The current owner-operator van in MTA Houston’s program is a “pilot” for including owner-operators in the program, which the agency views as a flexible way to increase the capacity of the program. However, MTA Houston is concurrently exploring ways to collapse their employer-based vanpools into one of their leasing agents. Prior to the onset of the recession and job losses, the program was financially unable to meet the demand for its expansion, since under its current subsidy model the more successful the program is the more it costs. It is easier to control costs through vans that are centrally leased and billed, so there is an advantage in their system to working with larger van providers over smaller providers, including owner-operators. In Houston’s experience another challenging aspect of having employer and owner-operator vans in a public program is ensuring they meet the requirements as public transportation. They’ve done this via simple agreement to date, but are concerned with how to ensure that the employer-based vanpools and the owner-operators are complying with the agreement.
- Successful incorporation of owner operators would require an individual contract with each operator.

Best Practices: While participation by owner-operators in existing vanpool programs, particularly those that do report to NTD, is very minimal, a simple structure is needed so that the owner-operators are not turned away from the program by complicated contracting, compliance reporting, and data collection.

Insurance

- All of the turnkey-contractors interviewed require that participating vanpool firms have a minimum level of insurance, ranging from $500,000-$1 million per van. In these programs the public agency does not provide assistance in obtaining insurance to the private firms. At MTA Houston, many of the participating vanpool providers, particularly the employer-based vanpools, carry higher levels of insurance than the program requires.
- The public programs interviewed obtain insurance either through a private provider or a public or state insurance pool (Washington State programs, Pace, UTA). Several of the Washington State programs maintain a cash reserve as a "backup" to the state insurance pools.

Best Practices: While vanpools tend to have a high safety rate, requiring the provision of a minimum level of insurance is a critical component of the program in light of its connection to a public agency. The provision of insurance options that vanpool leasing companies and owner-operators can take advantage of, and potentially a state/regional insurance pool as a rainy day fund, can both offer options and peace of mind to participating vanpools.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello, my name is _____________ and I'm working on a study to increase usage of vanpools and begin and promote the reporting of vanpool data to the National Transit Database (NTD) in Northern Virginia. As part of this study we are conducting a survey effort to identify the best practices of vanpool programs throughout the country that would be applicable to Northern Virginia. Are the person who could answer questions relating to administration and operation of your area's vanpool program?
[If YES] Would you mind answering some questions for me?
[If NO] If you are not the person responsible for the vanpool program, could you please direct me to the person I should speak with?

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

1. First, what is your role in you region's vanpool program?

2. When did the vanpool program begin, and when did you start reporting to NTD?

    a. How was the program started?

    b. How is the program funded, both now and when it first started?

    c. What prompted the agency/program/region to start collecting vanpool data to report to NTD?

    d. How large is the program in terms of the number of vanpools reporting? Is there a limit on the number of vehicles in the program?

    e. How many public agency staff are running the program, in terms of FTEs and roles?

    f. What were the biggest obstacles/challenges to getting the program up and running?

    g. What lessons have been learned about what works and doesn't work?

    h. How did you enroll existing vanpools to participate?

3. What agency runs the vanpool program overall, or do different agencies have different roles? What type of agencies are these (e.g. DOT, MPO, transit agency, TMA, etc.)?

4. Now , can you tell me how various aspects of the program works and who performs the different functions:

    a. Advertising, promotion and marketing?

    b. How are vanpools formed? Is there a matching service? Are participating vans automatically entered in the matching service?

    c. Formal acceptance of individual vanpools into the program

    d. How involved are the agencies in the day-to-day management of the vanpools?

    e. How is payment handled? Do passengers pay the driver, the vanpool leasing agency, or the public organizing agency? Does the cost for the passengers fluctuate if the number of people in the vanpool changes, i.e., someone leaves the vanpool?

5. Are there any private contractors involved in the program? If so, what are their roles?

6. What are the characteristics of a "typical vanpool," i.e., trip length, origin-destination, job sites (to one or multiple)?

OPERATIONS

7. Who owns the vans? Is it the public agency, a large van leasing company such as VPSI, other leasing companies, owner-operators, or a mix of these?

    a. If it is a mix of owners, about what percent of the vans are owned by the different types?

8. Who maintains the vehicles? Is there a formal maintenance program?

9. Do you conduct background checks of drivers or passengers? Of driving records? Of credit scores?

10. Do you monitor adherence to program rules by the vanpools? How?

11. How does the program meet ADA requirements?

12. Questions about insurance:
    b. Are participating vanpools required to have a minimal level of insurance coverage? Does this present a problem?

    c. How is insurance obtained i.e., by individuals, the leasing company or through a state program?

13. Have you had any problems with adding a person to an existing vanpool where there was space, but the vanpool operator did not want to add a person? How did you resolve the issue?

14. What type of marketing and branding do you have for the vanpool program?

    a. Are the vehicles branded? If so, do you have photographs you could provide?

    b. Did the issue of risk management come up in the decision of whether or not to brand the vehicles, i.e., exposure if the vehicle were involved in a crash?

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

15. What level and type of financial involvement does the public agency make available to participants in the vanpool program? What incentives/subsidies are used – funding, benefits, or a mix? *[Examples of incentives: provision of customer service; provision of vanpool coordinators; publication of fares and routes; provision of gas cards; provision/discount on insurance; provision of vehicle maintenance; GRH; spare vehicles]*

    d. to form new vanpools?

    e. to get existing vanpools to join the program?

    f. to report their data?

    g. What are the consequences for not reporting?

    h. Does the driver get an incentive, such as free fare or weekend use of the vehicle?

16. Do you know what percentage of riders associated with vanpools enrolled in your program receive a commuter subsidy (government or private)? How much is the normal/average subsidy in your area?

    i. Does the commuter subsidy impact whether some vanpools participate in the public program, i.e., they have enough rider subsidies so that they don't need the public vanpool subsidy and therefore don't report data?

    j. If so, how have you tried to resolve this?

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

17. Does the program include vanpools that travel between more than one urbanized area, as defined by NTD? If so, how is the mileage assigned or divided up, particularly the mileage occurring between the urban area boundaries?

18. How are capital and operating costs for the vehicles reported?

19. How is the FTA funding received through reporting of vanpool data to NTD divided? How do you determine how much funding goes where?

20. What is your system for collecting NTD data from the vanpools?

    k. Do you use any special technology?

    l. How often do you collect the data?

    m. How do you ensure timely reporting?

    n. What are your validation procedures for checking reported data

    o. What have been challenges in getting vanpools to report and how did you resolve them?

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

21. In the Northern Virginia region, about half of our existing vanpools are owned and operated individually, i.e., a person who owns the van and operates the vanpool, as opposed to the vans being leased through a public agency or a large leasing company like VPSI. Do you have independently operated vanpools participating, i.e., those now owned by the public agency, VPSI, or other leasing company?
    a. How many?
    b. Were there any challenges in getting them to participate?
    c. If not, do you have any ideas for how to get individual owner/operators to participate in a vanpool program?

BE SURE TO ASK FOR COPIES OF ANY FORMS OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS SUCH AS CONTRACTS, APPLICATION FORMS, REPORTING FORMS, ETC.

APPENDIX 2: DETAILED INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Ms. Jami Carrington, Program Manager
Interview Date: August 23, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 923 (End of FY 2010)

Program Type: Turnkey program with private operators VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) vanpool program began at end of Fiscal Year 2007, planning for the program starting in 2005. Generating board support at the agency and securing startup funding were two early challenges faced by MTA when establishing the vanpool program. Generating board support wasn't that much of a challenge but more of a milestone, once the board was educated and had all of their questions about vanpools answered. At the inception of the program the agency had to work closely with the region's private vanpool providers to assure them that they were not there to take over their business or replicate a service that they were offering, but that they wanted to be a true partner. Engaging with the private vanpool operators required effort but it was not particularly difficult to get their buy-in once the program concept was communicated. The major challenge confronting MTA as the agency established its vanpool program was securing startup funding. Local and federal grants, including Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (5316), provided the startup funding for the vanpool program.

When the program began there were originally three vendors involved, VPSI, Enterprise Rideshare and Midway Car Rental. Midway Car Rental withdrew from all operations in the Los Angeles area during the first year of the vanpool program. Los Angeles County MTA determined that it made more sense for the agency to operate a turnkey program rather than attempt to start a new vanpools public program, based on staff resources and constraints. One of the vanpool program objectives set by the agency was to seek additional and non-traditional solutions to transportation demand within Los Angeles County, while considering the how best to increase regional grant earnings. When MTA staff analyzed the most cost effective way to do this and compared directly operating a vanpool program versus purchasing vanpool services through a turnkey agreement, it was determined that a turnkey agreement would be more efficient and cost effective over the long term.

The interviewee's role as program manager is a full-time dedicated position that includes management of all day-to-day operations including data intake and processing, overseeing all final applications for enrollment, budget issues, budget authorization and managing relations with the two current vanpool contractors, VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare. In addition to the program manager there is one other full-time employee and a part-time intern that are dedicated to the vanpool program. There are two other employees that are tapped on a contract or as-needed basis. At the close of Fiscal Year 2010 the agency had 923 routes operating in service, as of September 1, 2010 they anticipate having 1,000 vanpools in service.

The private vendors are largely responsible for the advertising and promotion for the vanpool program to their existing and new vanpools. MTA's commute services department works with large employers (250 or more employees) to provide TDM services, and they also include information on vanpools in their work. MTA's marketing department has also done radio ads, van wraps to promote the program and provided gas cards as short-term incentive for new enrollees. The program also had a targeted media push when it launched, and is included in the agency's annual campaign. The vanpool program was designed to take advantage of existing resources, both in terms of the capacity of the agency and in leveraging the private vendors to promote the program.

At the vanpool program's inception, participants were recruited into the program in several ways. A targeted mailing was sent to identified eligible participants through the program's private providers, and many of these vanpools signed up for the public program. MTA found that often times vanpool vendors overestimated the number of vanpools they had in operation. MTA also did some "aggressive" employer outreach and gave presentations to any audience that they could access, and they set-up vanpool program specific website. Today, MTA works with the vanpool providers to encourage eligible vanpools to apply to take part in the program. The private providers assist the individual vanpools in completing the application for the program, which becomes a contract with MTA and states that vanpools must comply with the terms of service and performance requirements (i.e. meet all of the requirements for a public vanpool program, report to NTD, maintain occupancy levels), and that they will be terminated for failure to meet these terms. The program is destination-based, so all enrolled vanpools must have a destination in Los Angeles County. (The adjacent counties of Orange and San Diego also have their own destination-based vanpool programs). It does not accept self-insured vanpools, but there are very few of these vanpools in the LA area. There were a few vanpools that preferred to remain private, but these were very few. The interviewee estimates that within the first two years of the program's operation it probably saturated at least 90 percent of the eligible participant market.

A new vanpool can be formed in several ways. The commute services department will work with large employees to identify groups of employees whose commuting routes and schedules match for a possible vanpool. Anyone from the general public that is interested in joining a vanpool can search for an available seat through one of several open public websites, were all of the vanpools are listed. Individuals most often will with work with the private vendors to set up new vanpools. The vendors typically have a waitlist of people that want to start a route, but will wait until they gather a number of interested individuals to establish a route. Once a vanpool is established and enrolled in the program, MTA will help fill empty seats and continue to coordinate with large employers.

In order for a vanpool to be formally accepted into the public program it must apply through the vendor, VPSI or Enterprise Rideshare. The application includes the signed contract, detailed route and all other documentation. MTA makes the final decision as to whether an individual vanpool meets the program's requirements, and will then notify accepted applicants of all of the necessary forms and documents that are required to maintain program enrollment. The vendors know the program requirements, so they normally do not forward an application that does not meet them. However, MTA has caught some non-conforming items on applications in the past; for example, the vendor may assign a vehicle to a vanpool that doesn't meet program requirements (any new vanpool starting in the program cannot use a vehicle that has been in service for more than 3 years).

While the program is still very new, the interviewee noted several "lessons learned" from its experience to-date. Most of these are in the administrative area and concern NTD reporting. Although the program began in FY 2007, it began by using a paper-based NTD reporting system. This has proved onerous to deal with, as someone in the program's staff must check each paper report and verify its accuracy. In NTD systems that allow for electronic reporting mistakes are minimized through the use of drop-down menus and automatic mistake/omission checking, reducing staff time spent on NTD administration. They also have realized the need to do ongoing training with the staff at VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare on the vanpool program and NTD reporting. Staff turnover at the private providers is quite frequent. However, it is critical that private provider staff understand the requirements of the program and NTD reporting to ensure accurate reports, that vanpools participating in the program meet all of the requirements for a true public vanpool, and that the vanpools maintain their required ridership and maintenance levels.

OPERATIONS

The contract with the vendors establishes a minimum level of insurance, and MTA will provide a copy of this contract. The vendors handle all interpersonal and vehicle issues related to the vanpools, very rarely has a vanpooler approached the MTA for assistance with these matters. They have never had any problems with wanting to add person to a vanpool and encountered resistance from the vanpoolers, as every vanpool understands that they are in a public ridesharing and that they must accept new riders as conditions of program participation.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

MTA subsidizes up to 50 percent a vanpool's monthly leasing cost up to $400, for example a $750 vanpool would receive a $350 subsidy. This level of subsidy is generally enough to induce participation in the program, in addition to any employer provided benefits or incentives to participate in vanpooling. In California large employers are subject by law to air quality mitigation requirements and receive very specific SOV commute reduction targets, for example a firm with 250 employees may have an assigned goal of reducing SOV use by its employees by 2 percent annually. To meet these goals most large employers offer an array of benefits and incentives, including providing contributions for public transportation costs. Large employers are highly motivated to meet their assigned SOV use reduction targets because if they do not then the state will penalize them. Some LA area employers offer the pre-tax benefit, but not nearly to the scale that Federal workers receive. For workers that receive the pre-tax benefit the total cost of vanpooling may be nearly free, but in most cases the employer provided benefit just reduces out-of-pocket expenses. Vanpool groups submit their mileage, hours, passenger and cost (fuel, parking, tolls) data to MTA on a monthly basis, and then MTA directly reimburses the vendors for the cost of the subsidy.

In a recent survey of vanpool participants more than 90 percent of the respondents listed the low cost of vanpooling vis-à-vis SOV use as their motivation for participating in a vanpool. The majority of current vanpool participants formerly used SOVs or carpooled for their commute trips. The average vanpool daily roundtrip in their program is 95 miles. The main benefit of participation in the public program for contractors VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare is increased consistency and reduced turnover in vanpools. Prior to the establishment of the public program, participants would simply turn in a vanpool when they couldn't maintain enough riders to make it cost-effective. MTA assistance in maintaining ridership levels and the subsidy incentive have helped reduce the rate of vanpool turnover. The more people that are in a vanpool the less money it will cost, so there is a financial incentive to maintain occupancy. In the vanpools that have been terminated for failure to comply with the program rules, they've found that the people will lose interest in vanpooling as it becomes less cost-effective without the subsidy or ridership levels, and turn in their vanpools. The vanpool subsidy is the equivalent of getting a free bus pass for individuals not receiving an employer subsidy.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

MTA's vanpools travel through more than eight UZAs, and the miles are reported by UZA in NTD. About half of the vanpools in the program start and end in Los Angeles County, and the UZA boundaries closely resemble those of the county. When a new route enters into the program they do a GIS overlay to determine the percentage of the route's miles by UZA, and then allocate miles to each UZA based on this. As the UZA allocation determines 5307 earnings, Los Angeles Metro has several local interagency agreements that provides for the disbursement of funds proportional to the amount of 5307 generated from vanpools will be returned to the agency that reported them. The 5307 funds earned are typically reinvested in the vanpool program to provide for the subsidy. There is one UZA that Los Angeles County vanpools travel through that has not signed the interagency agreement, and this UZA is receiving the 5307 funds earned by MTA vanpools. Initially they did not limit applications to areas that were not part of the interagency agreement, which is something that the interviewee wishes was done differently when the program began. Almost all of the vanpools pass only through UZAs with more than 200,000 residents, so there is no outside "grey area," 93 percent of the miles that they report go through their own UZA, only 7 percent of the miles come from travel through other UZAs.

As noted earlier, MTA is using a paper-based system to collect NTD data from the vanpools. Vanpooler's record rider and route information daily on a paper format, and then submit their paper-based reports monthly via eFax, a system that sends faxes via email in pdf format to the agency. The use of eFax helps the agency meet their requirements to maintain electronic as well as paper files. However, it has not reduced the time vanpool program staff spends on dealing with errors and missing information on the monthly reports, which is significant. A large chunk of the time of the as-needed ½ FTE position is devoted to following up with people about incomplete or delinquent NTD reports.

By the due date for NTD reporting there are usually 120-180 outstanding reports. A good portion of the reports that were submitted on-time are incomplete, illegible, not signed, they can't tell who it is from, were faxed on the wrong side, or have some other math or recording error. One of the lessons learned for the agency was to provide extra support to the vanpool drivers and bookkeepers, as these people are volunteers and not transit professionals they are not accustomed to reporting and recording the required information. MTA now provides training to these individuals to familiarize them with the NTD reporting process. MTA staff will email all vanpool bookkeeper that fail to turn in the monthly report, and if they still do not receive the report then they will call them. Some individuals have admitted to MTA that they wait for the telephone reminder to submit their report. Others check email infrequently or have old, non-working email addresses listed, which complicates MTA's efforts to communicate with the vanpools. Some of the best vanpool participants now are ones that have lost their subsidy due to failure to report in the past.

MTA is hoping to transition to an electronic system, in order to both reduce the time that staff spends resolving issues on the reports and to increase accuracy and ease of reporting. MTA is currently working on putting together a scope of work for potential electronic reporting vendors to bid on, and they need to get a program budget adjustment to provide the funds that will enable the agency to establish electronic NTD reporting. The interviewee suspects that it will take about a year to transition to electronic reporting, and that it will be a big learning curve for the vanpool participants. In their recent survey of vanpool riders only 55 percent of respondents indicated that they wanted to be able to report online, and they have many riders that are not comfortable using technology (including many blue-collar, non-English speaking, and older individuals and those without a computer at home). Neighboring San Diego County is now transitioning to an electronic system and encountering some resistance from riders accustomed to using the paper system. By contrast, Orange County Transit Authority started their program with an online reporting system and has not encountered any rider complaints. The interviewee recommended starting with an electronic NTD reporting system, rather than allowing a paper option. Even after MTA transitions to an electronic NTD reporting system, they will still have to allow a paper reporting option for the large percentage of their riders that do not want to report electronically. They are monitoring the VPSI pilot of the AVEGO technology, but MTA wants to ensure that this technology works well at a smaller program before considering adopting it.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

There are no independent owner/operators participating in the MTA's public vanpool program, so this question did not apply. MTA believes that a lot of vanpools that may have been private went into VPSI or Enterprise Rideshare when the program started to take advantage of the subsidy.

Metropolitan Transit Authority, Houston, Texas

Mr. David McMaster, Director STAR Regional Vanpool
Interview Date: August 23, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 708 (August 2010)

Program Type: Contracted to a "master contractor" that works with private subcontractors, including operators VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare, as well as employer-based vanpools programs

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Vanpooling originated in Houston during the energy crisis of the 1970s as a private Enterprise Rideshare operated by major employers. The area's major employers, many large energy and engineering firms, each independently developed their own employee vanpools. Some of these employer vanpool programs purchased and maintained their own vehicles, while others leased vehicles through firms such as VPSI. The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) was created in 1979 to take over the City of Houston's bus operations and expand the area's transit capacity, but was not initially involved with vanpools. While employer-based vanpools continued in the early 1980s in response to increasing traffic congestion and the ability of vanpools to use the region's HOV lanes, but in the mid-1980s when the MTA started building constructing and operating commuter lots in the downtown area many private vanpools that were coming from other parts of the City of Houston were discontinued. Vanpools continued to travel to Houston from suburban areas further away. It was at this time that the agency first became involved in vanpools, registering the vanpools coming from locations outside of Houston to use the HOV lanes, later offering vanpool ridematching and incentives. In 1996 the MPO put the vanpools program into their TIP to receive CMAQ funds to get funds to cover vanpools for the entire region, and not just the City of Houston service area for the transit authority. The vanpools program now covers an 8 county area, far beyond the service area of the transit authority. Some of the vanpools in the program do not even enter the transit authority's service area.

Today, grant funds are used for rider subsidies and marketing and outreach efforts to expand the program. Prior to 1996 the vanpool program operated entirely on local funding. The transit authority is the recipient of the revenue from a one percent sales tax, and this alone provided funding for all vanpooling incentives and program staff. When the agency first received CMAQ funding it made an agreement that it would continue to put the same amount of funding into vanpools as it would have without the grant, and that CMAQ funding would only be used for program expansion. There were some complicated formulas that went into this agreement, and it lasted for a while. As after the first three years of CMAQ funding cannot be used for operations, the agency added FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) grants for additional operational support. CMAQ is today dedicated for things that it can be 100 percent allocated, such as marketing. Around two years ago the agency started using FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant funding to lease vans for reverse commute routes. MTA cannot use 5307 funding for its vanpool program's operations, since as the area has a population of greater than a million residents. Even if it could, actually using 5307 funding for operations would be complicated since the program itself doesn't actually own any of the vans. The 5307 funding earned by the vanpool program is used by the agency for other capital projects, including purchasing buses and building rail. The interviewee has heard of other agencies that put 5307 funding into capital costs for other modes then put a proportional share of funding from other sources into their vanpool programs.

The program currently has 708 vanpools that travel an average of 55 miles roundtrip each workday. There is no limit on the number of vans since the program is run through third-party providers, although there was a delay in getting vans during the summer of 2008 when gas prices and demand for the program was high. The program is administered through what is termed the ‘vanpool management operating agreement’ with a ‘master contractor’, which then subcontracts for the van operations with firms including VPSI and Enterprise Rideshare and with five employer-based vanpool programs that collectively provide 100 vans, and with a single owner-operator. The master contractor also provides all of the administration and customer service components of the vanpool program. Over the past two years, with the impact of Hurricane Ike and the economic recession and associated job losses, the program has lost around 1,000 vanpoolers and 100 vans. Today, while vanpooler attrition has ceased, there are no signs that demand for vanpools will return to former highs in the foreseeable future. The vanpool firms operating the program’s service currently have unused vans that may be sold if they are not put into service soon.

The interviewee is the only employee at the transit agency that is assigned to the vanpool program, although the agency’s financial staff assists on a limited basis with reviewing some of the financial documentation for the program. The master contractor has nine people that work full-time on the vanpools program, three individuals that do employer outreach and work with major employers, three individuals that provide customer service for the vanpoolers, and three people that are fulltime fare clerks that bill and collect fares from the vanpool groups. A number of others at the master contractor work part of the time on the vanpool program, including many managerial level staff (a financial supervisor and writings and communications professionals). There is a research analyst that works part time on the vanpool program to manage the NTD reporting process. The master contractor also uses a subcontractor for events (including staffing transportation fairs), marketing, design and public relations work. All of these aspects of the vanpool program were formerly performed in-house, but the agency’s previous leadership believed that they could save funds, particularly long-term pension costs, by contracting the work out. However, a recent MTA analysis found that the program costs would be the same either in-house or outsourced. Since the functions are now outsourced they have decided to continue working with a master contractor, however, had the program’s functions never been outsourced there would be no compelling reason to do so.

NTD reporting first began in the late 1990s, when VPSI reached around 100 vans in the region and began reporting data based on a sampling methodology for their vans on behalf of the agency. However, this only included the data from VPSI vans. In 2005 the agency took over the responsibility of reporting to NTD, and they expanded NTD reporting to cover vans from all providers, including VPSI, Enterprise Rideshare, major employers that have their own fleets, and other providers. It was at that time that the agency began discussions with the areas major employer-based fleets, including those of firms such as Chevron and Texaco, about opening up their vans to the public and entering into an FTA-compliant public program. Many of the employer-based fleets chose to join the public vanpool program at this time, with some restrictions and differences than the vanpool fleets provided by the leasing firms. For example, while the regional vanpool program logo and number appears on the non-Employer owned vans, it does not appear on a Chevron or Texaco van, these vans remain branded with the logo of the firm that owns them. Some firms have higher insurance requirements than the public program, and will not provide a transportation subsidy or van unless they are assured that the van their employees is riding in meets those requirements. Another firm has required that a monitoring device that records speeds be installed in their vans so that they can ensure that their vehicles are not speeding. The agency does ensure that the private employer owned vehicle fleets in the program meet all of the basic requirements for participation in a public program, including making their seats available in a public ridematching system. One employer requires that any inquires about open seats on their vans first pass through a corporate transportation manager, before any non-firm employee can join their vanpool. In general, the private firms are fairly concerned about limiting the presence of non-firm employees on their vanpools. Houston has a very competitive market for energy technology talent, and firms are afraid that vanpoolers that share a van with individuals from competing firms may share sensitive corporate information or be more likely to receive job offers from competing firms. This gives corporate transportation managers a strong incentive to ensure that their vans remain full at all times.

OPERATIONS

There are no background checks required for the passengers, but the van provider must approve all drivers. The van providers are typically concerned with insurance costs and require full driving records and credit checks of potential drivers. The agency does require that if a rider wants to bring their child on board a vanpool that the parents sign an affidavit accepting responsibility for the child and confirming that the child will never ride on the vanpool alone. This prevents the agency from having to run criminal background checks on all of the riders. Details about the insurance requirements for the program are contained in their master contractor scope of services document, which the interviewee will provide.

Program adherence isn't very actively monitored, but there are several checks in place to ensure that program rules are followed. All of the non-employer owned have the program's logo and phone number prominent displayed, and program will receive calls about non law-abiding and speeding vanpools. Members of the vanpools will often report safety or other issues directly to the vanpool program. Many of the vanpools operate in the region's HOV lanes and park in designated park and ride lots, both of which are operated by the transit authority and patrolled by the transit agency's police force. They also periodically re-check the driving records of the drivers through the vanpool providers.
To meet ADA requirements the program has an agreement with the providers that if requested they will provide a lift-equipped vehicle within a reasonable time period. This has never happened to-date. However, should a life-equipped vehicle be requested the agency anticipated needing to pay the extra cost of such a vehicle and to help the provider procure it.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

The program currently offers a per-van subsidy based on the number of qualified riders. A qualified rider must be a full-time rider that has 12 or more roundtrips per month (including excused absences such as vacation time, sick days or business travel). Each qualified rider receives $35 per month towards the total cost of the vanpool, so a vanpool with 5 riders would have a $175 subsidy while one with 15 riders would have a $525 subsidy. The average subsidy a van receives is $350. The interviewee would not recommend a subsidy system based on the number of riders, as its becomes very complicated during the billing process. They've also had a few instances where vanpools have added a rider or two that didn't actually exist to get an extra $35 or $60 subsidy. If they were to design this aspect of the program from scratch again, MTA would instead offer a set subsidy and institute a minimum number of riders per van.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

MTA uses Trapeze Ridepro for vanpool tracking, ridematching and monthly NTD reporting (roster, ridership, mileage, etc). Information on the vans themselves needed for NTD reporting comes directly from the van providers. When a route is created it is mapped in Ridepro for mileage, and each time the roster is updated the route is re-checked. Through the billing process information about the cost of fuel, the lease and maintenance is captured. When the program first began recording vanpool data they did not accurately capture all of the costs of the vanpool, so they were significantly underreporting the costs of each vanpool. On a daily basis the only thing that vanpool participants need to do is to check-off who is riding in the vanpool, they enter this information online once a month. All of the other information required for NTD reporting is captured through Ridepro, the providers, or through the billing process. On an annual basis the program does an inventory of all of the vehicles in the program.

The area covered by the vanpool program does not included more than one UZA, as the Houston area has a fairly large single UZA. They do have vans that travel through non-UZA areas, but these miles are all reported within the UZA, per FTA guidance. There is a chance that Census 2010 will create a new UZA through which their vans will have to travel, but if this happens the agency could use their Ridepro GIS capability to identify the number of miles in each UZA per vanpool pretty quickly.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

MTA Houston currently has a single owner-operator van in its fleet, along with five employer-based vans that together provide approximately 100 vans. Houston is interested in incorporating more owner-operator vans into their program, and believes that it would be possible to structure their participation in such a way so that they can comply with the program rules. The current owner-operator van in MTA Houston's program is a "pilot" for including owner-operators in the program, which the agency views as a flexible way to increase the capacity of the program. However, MTA Houston is concurrently exploring ways to collapse their employer-based vanpools into one of their leasing agents. Prior to the onset of the recession and job losses, the program was financially unable to meet the demand for its expansion, since under its current subsidy model the more successful the program is the more it costs. It is easier to control costs through vans that are centrally leased and billed, so there is an advantage in their system to working with larger van providers over smaller providers, including owner-operators. In Houston's experience another challenging aspect of having employer and owner-operator vans in a public program is ensuring they meet the requirements as public transportation. They've done this via simple agreement to date, but are concerned with how to ensure that the employer-based vanpools and the owner-operators are complying with the agreement.

King County Transit

Mr. Syd Pawlowski, Supervisor Rideshare Operations, Metro Transit Division
Interview Date: August 20, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 1,088 (End of Calendar Year 2009)

Type of Program: Public, no private vanpool programs participate or operate in Washington State

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The program began in the 1970s, and there are currently approximately 1,200 vanpools in the King County Transit Program. The counties to the north and south of King County (Snohomish County and Pierce County) also operate public vanpool programs, and this provides a very robust public vanpool capacity in the greater Seattle-Tacoma area. There are no private vanpool firms operating in the state of Washington. The interviewee felt very strongly that the private vanpool operators could not compete with the public transit agencies providers in terms of fares or operational costs. Even though the vanpool program in King County is public, they operate under 100 percent recovery of capital and operational costs and recovery of 50 percent of the administrative costs. In a typical year, farebox revenues will provide 30-50 percent of the program's administrative cost; the rest is subsidized by the agency.

King County Transit believes in using short-term incentives instead of long-term subsidies. They provide the insurance and maintenance costs for the vans in full, and they also provide quality, direct customer service. They also operate within a statewide ridematching system that is searchable on the web at: http://www.rideshareonline.com/.

The philosophy of King County Transit vanpool program is that the commitment of the agency is to provide the level of service that citizens expect from a public agency, and that this is broader than what say, a Transportation Management Agency (TMA), may provide. At a minimum this includes:

- Good maintenance at convenient locations and reliable vehicles
- Quality Customer Services (including dealing with interpersonal problems among vanpoolers, calculating monthly fares, etc.)
- Ridematching and vanpool formation
- Insurance (through a state program)

King County Transit's vanpool program is staffed by 38 people in working three divisions:

- Maintenance and Fleet Operations: 10 People
- Finance (Monthly NTD Reporting, Revenue Collection, etc.): 10 People
- Ridematch Group (Employer TDM Services, Outreach Staff, Ridematching Website Support): 18 People

One full FTE is dedicated to customer service issues relating to interpersonal "people problems" (i.e. smelly feet, too much perfume, tardiness, wanting to bring a baby on board, complaints of speeding, etc.) on the vanpools.

The program's annual revenue of $9 million is spent to support the vanpools continued operations:

- Operational Expenses: $5.8 Million ($4.4 million direct operating expenses, $1.8 million administrative expenses)
- Capital Expenses: $3 Million

The program has no actual marketing budget, but they leverage the TMA's activities and other related non-profits, as well as employer transportation coordinators, to do marketing for them. For example, if the program wants to advertise a specific promotion, they'll create a flyer and email to this group of organizations for distribution.

The vanpool program began by targeting the area's approximately 400 major employers (including firms such as Boeing and Weyerhaeuser) for vanpoolers. In instances where there are a large number of individuals traveling to a single site, such as a Boeing office or downtown Seattle, it is usually relatively easy to form a vanpool.

OPERATIONS

King County Transit has tried over the years to assist with the set-up of independent vanpools, but in their experience these vanpools cannot provide enough of a critical mass to get a reduced insurance rate that allows them to lower their fares to the point where they could compete with the public program. Since King County Transit buys their own vehicles and provides insurance, the agency can operate its vanpool program much more cheaply and efficiently than a private vanpool owner or an individual leasing a vanpool. King County Transit keeps their costs low by subcontracting all of their maintenance costs for the vehicles collectively, and thus getting reduced maintenance service rates, having a reserve of several million dollars for insurance and having good risk management controls in place. King County Transit is also strategic in its acquisition of vanpool vehicles; a vanpool vehicle is sold typically after six years in service. While other public agencies may buy a vehicle and use it until its value is depreciated down to nothing and they have no funds left over to buy new equipment, King County Transit will sell vehicles when 30-40 percent of their value is remaining. These practices help King County Transit keep its vanpool fares low. Approximately 25 vanpools start and fold a month, and this creates a fair amount of administrative work for the program staff. The program is never static.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

King County Transit isn't currently offering any incentives for new vanpoolers, although they have in the past. Subsidies are provided by some area employers, but not by all. The primary incentive for individuals to want to join the vanpool program is to save money on their commute costs, and this tends to be enough of an incentive to sustain the program.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

According to the Interviewee, since all of the surrounding counties have their own vanpool programs, each county counts its vanpool miles traveled for the vanpools in their own program, regardless of where the vanpool begins or ends.

To collect the NTD data King County Transit uses an FTA-approved sample survey, they refuse to have someone need to check who is riding everyday and strongly feel that this is too much of a bureaucratic approach. They have also had talks with AVEGO about possible use of their system and are planning to do a limited demonstration with it early next year. The AVEGO system offers route map optimization and automated NTD reporting, which would largely eliminate the burden of NTD reporting.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

While all of the vanpool programs in Washington State are strictly public, the interviewee did offer several operational and incentive suggestions to entice independent owner/operators to join a public program. He described King County Transit's approach as the "Costco philosophy" of vanpooling – that is that to be successful and lower fares one buys in bulk and gets a discount that could be bundled and then passed on to the group at a reduced rate. This would apply to insurance, providing good insurance at a low rate is important, but private insurance (such as Lancer's) isn't cheap. It could also apply to maintenance, a group maintenance program would both ensure that vehicles are maintained on a regular basis lowering insurance costs, and provide a tangible benefit to independent owner/operators. Another option would be to assist in the purchase of vehicles and then sell it at a reduced price or even give it to the vanpool drivers after a vehicle has exceeded its service lifetime. The interviewee emphasized that we need to understand what the driver's actually need and assess how we can fill that void, prior to making other plans.

Community Transit, Snohomish County, Washington

Ms. Dawn Kirsch, Supervisor, Vanpool Program
Interview Date: August 27, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 396 (August 2010)

Type of Program: Public, no private vanpool programs participate or operate in Washington State

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Community Transit's Vanpool Program began in 1986, and today has 396 participating vanpools. The program is managed by Interviewee Dawn Kirsch, and staffed by four additional vanpool coordinators. The supervisor is responsible for overall program management and policies, determining vehicle specifications and ordering vehicles for the vanpool program, as well as managing over 30 vanpool groups. Each coordinator is responsible for dealing with all aspects of a set of vanpool groups, including group formation, dealing with customer service and interpersonal issues, training drivers and book keepers, NTD reporting and ensuring, vehicle maintenance, and ensuring that all program rules are followed.

The vanpool program does not do its own marketing, the marketing department of the transit agency includes vanpool in their marketing materials. However, their program has little need for formal marketing. When asked, vanpool coordinators will make site visits to major employers to introduce employees and employee transportation coordinators to the vanpool program, but this doesn't occur very often. Most vanpoolers find out about the program through word-of-mouth or from seeing the branded vanpool vehicles on the region's HOV lanes. Community Transit does participate in the state's online ridematching database, but it is unclear to them how many of their vanpools are formed through this database.

The vanpool program is funded in multiple ways, but 75 percent of the total cost of the program is recovered in the fares. Farebox recovery covers all of the costs of the program except for capital expenses. Community Transit uses some federal grants and other funds to purchase replacement or expansion vans. While they are not sure what Federal grants fund these capital acquisitions, the interviewee believed that much of it was come from 5307 funds. 5307 funding in Washington State is normally distributed in the areas of greatest need, and is frequently used to purchase new buses and vanpool vehicles. In Washington State some vanpool programs are mandated to recover 100 percent of their costs in farebox revenues, others are not.

The size of the vanpool programs is only limited by its funding. Just a few years ago, prior to the onset of the current recession and when gas prices were at their peak, there was a waitlist of individuals wanting to join a vanpool. Currently there is no vanpool waitlist. There are no private vanpool operators in Washington State, mainly because private providers cannot compete with the fares offered by the public programs in the state. However, in Washington State individuals are allowed to join any vanpool program in the jurisdiction either at the origin or destination of their trip. This creates some friendly competition among the vanpool agencies, as each county offers its own vanpool program.

The average Community Transit vanpool commute is approximately 58 miles roundtrip. Many vanpools are going to major employment sites. Community Transit has 103 vanpools traveling to Boeing that are comprised entirely of Boeing employees. As the Boeing plant in Snohomish County is a manufacturing facility many of the employees of this plant are shift workers, and so it often happens that a vanpool to Boeing can only practically be comprised of Boeing employees.

OPERATIONS

All maintenance is done in-house, performed at Community Transit's bus maintenance bays. When a vanpool driver brings in a vehicle for maintenance their vanpool coordinator will go and meet them at the maintenance bay (which is co-located with Community Transit's offices), which allows the Vanpool Coordinators to get to know the vanpool groups on a face-to-face basis. No background checks are conducted on drivers or passengers, but all potential vanpool drivers must provide a complete driving record. All of Community Transit's vehicles are prominently branded.

To meet ADA requirements they have two lift-equipped vans. Most of the time neither of these vans are in use; currently one of the lift-equipped vans is in use. Community Transit has a verbal agreement with other vanpool programs in the state to share their lift-equipped vehicles as needed, as not all vanpool programs in the state own lift-equipped vans.

Adherence to program rules is monitored in several different ways. Vanpool coordinators deal with any vanpool-related complaints that come into the transit agency's customer service hotline, including issues such as unsafe driving practices on the vanpools that could be violations of the programs rules. They also closely monitor the information that is submitted in the monthly NTD reports and items such as mileage and they monitor parking of the vehicles. Drivers are allowed to put 160 miles of personal use on the vanpool vehicles each month, but they must pay .51 cents a mile for these miles and cannot transport anyone that is not a vanpool participant or a relative (so for example, a vanpool driver could not use the vanpool vehicle to transport a little league team to a game).

The Washington State Transit Insurance Pool covers all of Community Transit's services. Since all vanpools in the state are insured at the same rate, Community Transit carries an additional $60,000 in insurance for underinsured vanpools. The vanpool driver and riders are covered 100 percent, but if they do something with the vehicle that is against the program rules or cause an accident that is their fault they must use their own insurance. There has never been an incident that required a vanpool driver or rider to use his or her own insurance in the 24 years that the program has been in place.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

In the Puget Sound region most employers subsidize their employees' commutes because of the state's Commute Trip Reduction law. Many employers offer a 100% subsidy of the cost of a vanpool fare, which is typically $60-$65 per person. The lowest subsidy level offered is actually by the region's largest employer, Boeing, which provides $30 a month to its vanpoolers. At Community Transit they don't have any vanpool promotions going on at this time, again other than the fact that the agencies subsidize the capital cost of the program, which is around 25 percent of the program's total cost. Typically, the cost of gas has the greatest impact on the participation levels in the program.

In the past Community Transit offered gift cards to new vanpool riders ($100 if they rode for 3 consecutive months) and to new vanpool drivers ($100 for each new driver). Part of a current vanpool-related grant received from the Washington State DOT was supposed to fund these type of vanpool incentives, however, transit agencies in Washington State have collectively decided that they cannot use these funds for gift cards or other similar incentives due to the general financial difficulty faced by all of the local transit agencies and the State DOT. Many of the primary vanpool drivers ride entirely for free, and the primary bookkeeper for each vanpool may also ride at a reduced fare, but this varies by vanpool group.

Vanpoolers that do not receive a 100 percent subsidy from their employer may be tempted to shop around to other vanpool programs in the area, again vanpoolers are free to choose a vanpool program that is based in the jurisdiction of their origin or destination. King County Transit's fares tend to be higher than Community Transit's, but Community Transit's fares are often higher than those of more sparsely populated counties adjacent to it.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

The majority of Community Transit's vans travel only through established UZAs, and the Community Transit vanpool coordinators are not involved in the distribution of 5307 funds by UZA, the agency's financial staff deal with these issues.

Data for NTD reporting is collected in a monthly form and ridership report. A vanpool's bookkeeper will use a clipboard and a paper form to collect the data on a daily basis. The vanpool bookkeeper then inputs this data into an Excel version of the form, which was created for Community Transit about 18 months ago by a vanpooler that is employed by Microsoft. The Excel form automatically computes items such as passenger miles, and has proven very useful in limiting the number of errors in the form and helping to collect the information in a uniform way and in an efficient basis. The only complaints that they've had from vanpool bookkeepers about the volume of work required for NTD reporting have come from individuals that have transitioned from King County Transit, where they collect NTD information via a survey and not daily reporting. The vanpool coordinators "audit" each other's NTD reports and forms, they each check 10 of the monthly vanpool reports of another vanpool coordinator to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Timely NTD reporting is not a major issue. Community Transit has a $10 late fee for failure to submit monthly NTD reports by the 7th of each month, however, but this had not had an impact on the bookkeepers that cannot consistently report on time. If there is a particular bookkeeper that has issues filling out or submitting the NTD forms they are provided with further training by Community Transit. If the bookkeeper cannot handle the position after further training by a vanpool coordinator and four or five months as a bookkeeper, a vanpool coordinator will approach the vanpool about assigning a new bookkeeper.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

All vanpool operators in Washington State are public agencies.

Pierce County Transit, Washington

Ms. Lani Fowlkes, Vanpool Assistant Manager
Interview Date: August 27, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 326

Program Type: Public

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Pierce County Transit is the third largest transit agency in the State, but within the Puget Sound area it is more suburban than urban and offers transit services geared towards suburban residents. While neighboring county transit agencies also offer vanpool programs, the transit agencies feel that they are more partners than competitors, and the agencies meet once a quarter with the State DOT to discuss their programs, shared incentives and State DOT funding for incentives and expansion and replacement vehicles. Pierce County started their vanpool program in 1986, prior to this there were no vanpools in the county. Most of the individuals that transitioned to vanpooling came from SOVs or carpools. There are no private vanpool providers operating in Washington State.

The program currently has 326 vans and approximately 2,500 volunteer vanpoolers; many of these individuals have participated in the vanpool program for at least five years. The majority of the vanpoolers work a typical 40-hour week. During the summer of 2008 when gas prices were high they had about 30 groups ready to form and couldn't meet the demand for vehicles. Today there isn't a waiting list, but they don't have any extra vehicles either. The total roundtrip commute of the vans range from 20 miles to 170 miles, with an average of roundtrip of 65 miles, carrying an average of 8-9 passengers per van. The average fare of $80-$85 per rider covers fuel, maintenance and insurance costs. These fares are much lower than the cost of using an SOV for commuting, and are the main source of program appeal for participants. Some vanpools stop at only one employment destination, while others may make up to 3 stops. Typically there are two stops for final worksite destinations.

The program began to report to NTD in 1992, and today 5307 funds provide $2 million that is used entirely for the vanpool program. Direct operating costs are completely covered by vanpool fares, these costs account for between 85 and 89 percent of the total program cost. Replacement vehicles are purchased with federal funds that require a match, the match funding will come from the Pierce Transit General Capital Fund. The State DOT provides funding for expansion vans.

Pierce Transit has a total staff of 11 working on the vanpool program full-time, including 2 management positions. The nine staff vanpool coordinators each work with assigned groups on customer service issues, volunteer driver and bookkeeper training, getting vehicles in for maintenance and ensuring accurate NTD reporting. The program is audited every year and it is critical that they have all of the financial information related to NTD reporting recorded accurately, including fares, expenses, receipts and ridership counts. Ridership and mileage is recorded on the vans every day.

The biggest obstacle in the establishment of the vanpool program was convincing a bus company that vanpools are an integral part of transportation services, at a time when few vanpools existed nationally. Now, the program staff engages in ongoing education of the other staff at the transit agency and with other stakeholders to ensure that they understand the value of vanpooling. A strong education and outreach component is critical to long-term vanpool program success. The interviewee emphasized that one should always assume that the public is not familiar with vanpooling or that they have misconceptions about it. Most people think vanpools operated by public transit employees instead of volunteers, and are not familiar with the cost-effectiveness of vanpools.

Pierce Transit works with large employers directly to help them meet their legal obligations to reduce SOV commuting that stem from Washington's 1990 Commute Trip Reduction law. The agency has found that partnering with these major employers has been a very effective way to find and form vanpools, and that it really requires site visits and face-to-face contact to establish relationships that lead to long-term partnerships with major employers. Word-of mouth and positive testimonials from existing vanpool passengers are the only forms of marketing that the agencies currently has, aside from their employer outreach activities.

Vanpools are formed with the direct assistance of Pierce County Transit staff and, where applicable employer-based transportation management staff. Once a vanpool is formed then it is entered into the state's rideshareonline.com database, where the vanpool information is public and searchable. An individual searching for a vanpool seat can use the database to find a vanpool that fits their needs. The database currently includes about 8,000 registered vanpoolers.

To have a vanpool a volunteer bookkeeper must be designated. The volunteer bookkeeper's credit is checked and they are trained before they are approved to serve as the bookkeeper. The bookkeeper collects the fares and handles the monthly NTD reporting, both of which are submitted on the 10th of every month. The new regional smart pass, the "ORCA card" allows for electronic transfer of the money straight the agency. Pierce Transit has around 80 vanpools with major employer Boeing, and Boeing uses automatic electronic transfer of their subsidy for the vanpools to the agency.

OPERATIONS

Background checks are only performed on drivers that are carrying protective individuals, i.e. individuals that have mental or developmental disabilities and are unable to care for themselves, in their vanpools. Driving records for the program's 1,088 drivers are run every year. If a driver has more than four specific citations or violations on their record they are removed immediately. All vanpool drivers must prove that they are insurable to participate in the program, to do this the must provide a copy of their insurance card form their personal vehicle. Credit reports on the program's bookkeepers are run only at the time of application. Adherence to program rules is monitored continuously, and any reports of safety or rule-related violations are investigated on the same day that they are received. To enroll in the program as a participant individuals only have to complete an application form.

The program does have lift-equipped vehicles in their fleet to ensure ADA compliance. If a vanpool is requested to add a person and doesn't want to comply or claims that they do not have enough space then the vanpool coordinator will make a site visit. They usually allow for a little extra room on the vehicles, for example for a 15 passenger van the agency will approve a 13 passenger maximum. All of the vehicles are branded with the Pierce Transit logo, but there is very little budget for marketing or branding. The vanpool program occupies several pages on the Pierce County Transit website and they have two or three vanpool related brochures that are in commuter information center kiosks set up at major employment sites, but the program does not engage in any other marketing activities.

The vanpool program is insured through the Washington State Insurance Pool, which provides insurance for all transit agencies in the state. The vanpool program was originally self-insured, but it transitioned to the more cost effective state insurance pool. Since the accident rate for vanpools is so low, they have not had to make any modifications to any best practices relating to risk management, driver training, or the driver application process, as the agency already either met or exceeded the requirements of the state insurance pool.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

Pierce Transit is not currently offering any incentives for new vanpool riders, as a result of recent budget cuts. The agency formerly offered gift cards to attract new riders, providing a $100 give card to new program enrollees and offering new vanpoolers five free rides. Of the individuals that took advantage of the free rides promotion, over 85 percent stayed with the vanpool program long-term. The driver of the vanpool typically receives a free fare if there are at least five other riders in their vehicles; there can be no less than five total riders (including the driver) for a vehicle to remain in operation. Drivers pay 40 cents a mile for personal use of the vanpool vehicles and can use the vehicles for up to 1,800 personal miles per year. Between 80 and 90 percent of vanpool participants receive a monthly commuter subsidy from their employer, anything from $30 to the $230 federal maximum commuter benefit.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

In Washington State each county transit agency receives all of the vanpool miles for NTD for the vans in their program. In Pierce County information required for NTD reporting is recorded by hand everyday by trained bookkeepers riding in each vanpool. At the end of each month the bookkeepers are responsible for completing a two-page report based on their paper records and transferring their group's information into an Excel spreadsheet. The bookkeepers then forward their reports to eight designated volunteer managing bookkeepers that each manages 38 vanpool groups. The managing vanpool bookkeepers then input the data from their 38 vanpool groups into a single Excel spreadsheet, and they then forward this spreadsheet to Pierce County Transit vanpool coordinators. The vanpool coordinators then combine the information from the eight spreadsheets received from the managing bookkeepers into a single spreadsheet that contains all the NTD data for the agency for the monthly reporting period. While it has been easier and cleaner to deal with information that has been received in the electronic format, the agency still requires hardcopies of all of the papers related to NTD reporting. There are a lot of built-in checks and balances in the NTD reporting process to ensure that there are no reporting-related issues.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

All vanpool operators in Washington State are public agencies.

Utah Transit Authority, Salt Lake City, Utah

Ms. Wendy Karsch, Vanpool Support Specialist and Ms. Jan Maynard, Program Manager
Interview Date: August 26, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 525 (As of Interview)

Program Type: Public

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Vanpools in the Salt Lake City region started with a private company that began operating in the mid-late 1980s. UTA became involved with vanpools in the early 1990s, purchasing vanpool services from a third party. UTA brought the program in-house in 2003-04 to improve the coordination. Now everything associated with the program is run almost entirely in-house. This improves the ability of the program to oversee operations as well as ensure compliance with reporting to NTD, which started in the 1990s. The only activity that doesn’t occur in-house is vehicle maintenance. This is handled through agreements with certain vendors.

The program has a manger who oversees everything. There are three support specialists who are tasked with handling calls to arrange or locate a vanpool and respond to the day-to-day issues associated with the program. The program also has five maintenance staff, an accountant, and a marketing person who devotes 25 percent of their time to vanpools. This results in a staff of 9 FTEs.

Currently, UTA has 525 vanpools enrolled in the program. There are 19 vanpools associated with the U.S. Magnesium operation that are not part of UTA’s program and do not submit data to them for NTD purposes. Vanpools are enrolled when an interested party or group submits an application. If a match to an existing vanpool can be arranged this is done. If no vanpool currently exists to meet the need or the group is large enough to warrant starting a new pool one is created. Each vanpool requires at least two drivers and a bookkeeper. The size requirement will vary on the size of the van. There are minimum requirements for each van. Currently, there is no limit on the number of vanpools that can be operated. This is a result of charging a fare that covers many of the costs associated with operating each individual vanpool; an effort to keep the program sustainable.

Outreach of the program involves attending employee benefit fairs and cold calling to major employers in the region. They also use billboards and print or electronic media to market the program. Vehicles are also marked. This is viewed as a means to market the program as well as a monitoring device that allows the public to call in complaints about a vehicle if necessary.

OPERATIONS

As mentioned above, UTA handles most of the operations in-house. This includes: vehicle ownership, insurance, marketing, vanpool administration, NTD reporting, and marketing. Maintenance of the vehicles occurs primarily with local vendors who have agreements with UTA. Maintenance is paid by UTA and occasionally vendors may consult with UTA maintenance staff when they confront difficult decisions.

UTA owns all the vehicles. They currently provide a seven passenger minivan and 12 and 15 passenger vans. The minivan requires a minimum of five passengers and the vans require a minimum of seven. The cost to operate each type of vehicle is set in a fare schedule published by UTA. The overall cost of each vehicle type does not change regardless of the number of riders. This ensures that costs associated with operating the vehicle are almost entirely covered by the fare. Based on this setup the individual fares only change based on the number of riders. Costs covered in the fare include: maintenance, fuel, and insurance. UTA provides a list of approved vendors for various maintenance issues. Preventive maintenance associated with the vans is scheduled by the drivers of the van. They are responsible for ensuring that each vehicle is scheduled based on the recommended intervals. Vehicle fuel is handled using the Fuelman management system. Each vanpool is given a fuel card and instruction on how/where to use the card. Insurance for the vehicles is handled through the UTA insurance agreement. Additionally, they have a third party insurance provider for personal liability.

Drivers must submit a driving record in order to be accepted. Items such as DUIs, reckless driving convictions, and receiving two tickets in a three year period are items that would preclude someone from being approved. The records are rechecked every five years. In addition, the bookkeeper must submit a credit check. This is used to determine whether it is appropriate for the individual in question to be handling the finances of the vanpool. It is the bookkeeper's responsibility to collect fares and submit them to UTA as well as collect NTD-related data and report.

Vanpools are not subject to many rules from UTA. The only items monitored are NTD reporting and collection of fares. Each vanpool is responsible for setting up their own rules and monitoring them. Occasionally, UTA will be asked to handle situations involving a vanpool, but they try to not get involved is possible. Even situations where UTA is trying to match a rider to a vanpool are left up to the discretion of the vanpool as long as they are meeting the minimum requirement. UTA will mention that it is more beneficial to have more riders from a financial standpoint, but will not force a rider into a vanpool.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

UTA does not provide any sort of subsidy to entice people to join the vanpool program. They feel that the benefits associated with all the included features (fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc.) are enticement enough. UTA did comment that approximately 80-90 percent of their riders are taking advantage of the Federal transit subsidy. Half of these riders are associated with the military or National Guard. There was mention that some vanpools have distances that result in rider costs above the subsidy amount per month. The average vanpool in the UTA program drives 1,700 miles per month and they have some that travel as many as 3,500 miles per month. According to UTA's records the average Federal subsidy used is $125 per rider.

Other incentives that were mentioned by UTA include all the aspects tied joining the vanpool program. Included in the monthly fare is the use of vehicle, fuel of the vehicle, maintenance of the vehicle, and insurance. Participants also get access to loaner vehicles when their vehicle is in the shop for maintenance. The drivers of the van get 50 "personal" miles each month. UTA also cited their customer service as a benefit of the program.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

UTA requires their vanpools to submit reports on mileage and number of riders monthly. This information can be faxed or emailed to UTA, or can be entered online through a spreadsheet tool on UTA's website. This application removes the step of having UTA staff enter information into their database, freeing time.

UTA does not have a specific policy mandating when and how often vanpools should keep track of their mileage and riders. They do recommend that this is done daily in order to ensure accurate record keeping. The website application can be used to accomplish this task, but still requires the bookkeeper to keep track of the information through some other means because it is not a mobile application.
UTA provides an incentive to report vanpool data in a timely fashion. If data is submitted by the fifth of the following month then the bookkeeper is entered into a drawing to receive a $25 gift. UTA did not comment that there was difficulty in getting people to report. They did make a point to mention that those vanpools that were started after NTD reporting began were better about reporting on-time. They attributed this to not knowing any other way.

Allocation of miles associated with each vanpool for reporting purposes is decided based on the destination. All miles driven by a particular vanpool as linked to the region the vanpool is traveling to. The 5307 funds received through the vanpool program are placed into the larger 5307 funding pool for the region. The funds are then divided based on project need. There is no formula used or guarantee that funding received as a result of the vanpool program will return to the program.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

There are no independent owner/operators participating in the UTA's public vanpool program, so this question did not apply.

Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), San Francisco, California

Ms. Susan Heinrich, 511 Rideshare & Bicycling Coordinator
Interview Date: September 23, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 545 (As of Interview)

Program Type: Public oversight of a master contractor

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The vanpool program in San Francisco started in the 1970s during the energy crisis. The program was originally part of CalTrans, the State's DOT, and was operated by a contractor. The program and contractor was inherited by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which is the transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area). This arrangement was in place for 27 years, and in 2005 the contract for the program was awarded to a new contractor. Over the years the program has grown to include more than just vanpools. The program now includes ride matching for a number of commuting options and is part of the 511 service for the Bay Area.

The contractor is managed by the Rideshare and Bicycling Coordinator. The rideshare program utilizes 15 FTE who perform all the day-to-day duties associated with the program. The contractor performs outreach to local employers and other groups, develops and distributes marketing materials, staffs the customer center, and handles IT-related issues. The customer center responds to requests for ride matching as well as the formation of new vanpools. The contractor does not own any vehicles nor do they maintain contracts with any vanpool leasing companies. They will provide direction and contacts on how to setup a vanpool and who can be used to acquire the vehicles. Because the program does not operate any of the vans they do not collect any of the fares associated with the vanpools. Vanpools are brought into the existing program to receive commuter benefits. These include startup subsidies, lost passenger subsidies, and transponders for payment of tolls.

Currently the program keeps track of 545 different vanpools. These comprise owner-operated programs, leased vans, and employer-run programs. As of the interview there were 192 independent vanpool operators, 211 vanpools through leasing companies such as VPSI and Enterprise, and 142 employer-run vanpools. The respondent stated that there is no limit to the size of the program. The typical vanpool will travel approximately 60 miles. The county where the largest number of vanpools originated is Solano. The largest destination is San Mateo County with San Francisco shortly behind. The biggest O&D pair is vanpools coming from Solano County to the city of San Francisco.

The program is funded through two primary sources. Annually, the rideshare program receives CMAQ funding and funding from the local air district. The local contribution is approximately one million annually and comes from license plate fees. The annual budget for the rideshare program is around three million.

The MTC program does not currently report data to the NTD. There have been issues associated with how additional funding would be allocated as well as questions associated with future Federal funding programs. Currently, 5307 funding is not a return to source fund for the region. All 5307 monies come in and are dispersed based on project need. There is some worry that the rideshare program would not receive any additional funding despite bringing more funding to the region through vanpool reporting. There have also been fears raised that if the program had access to 5307 monies, it would “take” funding from agencies that currently receive 5307 funds. A final question raised has been associated with Federal reauthorization for transportation funding. There has been little indication of what funding sources and who would be eligible for them could result in the next transportation funding bill.

OPERATIONS

As mentioned above, neither MTC nor the contractor owns any of the vehicles. There are individuals who own their own vans, groups that lease vans through companies such as VPSI and Enterprise, and groups that drive employer-owned vehicles. Through this arrangement, MTC is not involved in or responsible for maintenance of the vehicles or insuring the vehicles. How these are handled will vary depending on the owner situation. The State does mandate a minimum level of insurance on vanpools and it is owner’s responsibility to ensure that is met. MTC does not request information about insurance.

Prior to starting a vanpool the driver must submit a driving record and also pass a medical examination per California law. MTC will provide up to a $75 reimbursement for the costs associated with the medical examination. These items do require periodic updates based on State laws.

Based on the way the program is setup, MTC is fairly “hands-off” when it comes to vanpool rules and regulations. The State mandates many of the rules that must be followed and MTC will assist participants by notifying them of all the regulations, but does not monitor them. The only item monitored by MTC is vanpool rider lists. This is a requirement to receive the toll transponder and requires periodic updating by each vanpool in order to continue receiving the benefit. Similarly to other regulation the San Francisco program does not handle request for lift-equipped vehicles. They did mention that VPSI and Enterprise do have some lift-equipped vehicles, but because they do provide vehicles they leave that requirement up to the owner to meet.

Vanpools in California are required to have signage that shows they are a vanpool. MTC will provide vehicle magnets that have the MTC logo as well as the mandated text. Leasing companies like VPSI and Enterprise incorporate the requirement into their own vehicle branding. Typically employer-owned vanpools will have their own branding, but occasionally will request the magnets from MTC.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

MTC provides a variety of incentives to their vanpool participants. Vanpools that are starting can receive a subsidy of $300 every three months up to $900. This is to help vanpools startup and get organized. In addition they provide a $100 dollar subsidy for each seat lost in a vanpool up to three months. This incentive is designed to help reduce the financial strain associated with losing a rider for a period of time. The other major incentive provided is the transponder for paying tolls. The transponders allow for a reduced fee because of the vanpool designation and are received when the vanpool registers with the ride matching service.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

Currently, MTC does not report data to NTD. As mentioned above, there have been political and inter-agency disagreements about how a program would be setup and how additional funding brought to the region would be used. Issues that have been discussed associated with reporting have revolved around getting vanpools to participate, especially since there are a large number of independently owned vanpools.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

MTC is aware of 192 independently-owned vanpools in the region. The vanpools have signed up as part of the ride matching service in order to receive incentives provided by MTC. There is question as to how this group and the employer-owned vans would be incorporated into a system that collected data for NTD. Since they haven't come to an agreement on collecting NTD data there has not been much effort spent on solving this issue to date.

Pace, Chicago, Illinois

Mr. Kristian Skogsbakken, Rideshare Administrator
Interview Date: October 1, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 278 (As of Interview)

Program Type: Public

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Pace began their vanpool program in 1991, modeled after the program started in King County, Washington. At the time the program started, King County was one of the largest and well known programs and was viewed as a model for vanpool programs. The program is funded through a combination of CMAQ grants and rider fares. The CMAQ funding received annually is used to purchase vehicles. A request for funding is made based on requirements for vehicle replacement and projections for new vanpools. The amount of funding received could be a limiting factor for the growth of the program on an annual basis since there is a limit to the funding available to purchase vans. According to Pace this has not happened, but they did come close in 2008. Operating costs are covered through the fares collected from riders. Pace has setup a fee schedule that is based on mileage traveled and number of persons in the van. Fares are billed and collected by Pace. Each individual rider received a bill and pay directly to Pace. Fares collected typically cover the operating costs for the program. Instances where additional funding may be needed would be pulled from the agency's general fund. In 2008 they had a 110 percent farebox recovery.

It is unknown what prompted Pace to begin collecting and reporting NTD data. The person overseeing the program was not involved when it was started and assumed that collection and reporting most likely started when the program was started in 1991. This was most likely based on input from King County. The program currently has 278 vanpools enrolled. This is down from the figure reported to NTD in 2007 of 677. Pace has seen a reduction in the number of enrolled vanpools that has corresponded with the current economic recession. They attribute this loss to an increase in unemployment and fewer people traveling to jobs. The typical vanpool contains six persons, travels 80 miles roundtrip, and has a fare per person of $130 per month.

Pace operates the program using approximately 10 FTEs. The exact number is unclear because some staff split duties with other van-related programs as well as other roles within Pace. The program utilizes an administrator, six vanpool representatives and a manager, and assistance from the business development team of five employees. The business development team assists with outreach. The vanpool representatives are tasked with the day-to-day tasks of the program. They assist parties in setting up their vanpool, deal with questions and issues associated with current vanpools, and handle the collection and management of data associated with vanpools. Each rep is responsible for approximately 50 vanpools.

In addition to the public agency staff, Pace utilizes some contractors or outside services to handle various aspects. Pace is responsible for operating the program, owning the vehicles, and marketing the program. They do outsource to a firm that provides assistance with marketing. Agency staff are in charge of assisting people interested in forming a vanpool navigate the process as well as handling daily tasks. Maintenance is handled through outside vendors. Pace uses LeasePlan to monitor the maintenance piece and administer the roadside assistance program for vanpools. LeasePlan has a collection of approved vendors who can provide maintenance under the program.

OPERATIONS

Pace owns all the vehicles used in the vanpool program. As mentioned above, LeasePlan is used to monitor the maintenance piece. Each vanpool driver is responsible for ensuring their vehicle is properly maintained and receives its scheduled maintenance. Pace will keep track of mileages through their fuel program and NTD reporting, and on occasion may need to remind a vanpool to have a scheduled maintenance performed. When taking a vehicle in for maintenance, the driver must use a LeasePlan approved vendor. Each driver has a maintenance card which is used to assign the maintenance costs to the vehicle and allowing for accounting by LeasePlan. LeasePlan will then submit a bill to Pace for payment of received maintenance services.

Drivers for vanpools must submit to a rigorous approval process. Each driver must undergo a driving record check, a criminal background check, a credit history check, and a physical. Some of the requirements are modeled on the Illinois DOT's commercial driving requirements. In addition to the background checks, drivers also must attend a daylong driving course. The requirements are meant to ensure that qualified drivers are driving Pace vans in an effort to reduce overall liability. Insurance for each vanpool is covered under Pace's policy.

Vans are branded with a small logo and the program's website. No issues have ever been raised about marking the vehicles and negative exposure. Vehicles that require additional equipment for ADA compliance are sent to an outside vendor who performs the modifications. These are done on an "as needed" basis.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

Incentives used by Pace are primarily directed at overcoming challenges that are commonly viewed by people who use vanpools. They provide a guaranteed ride home program to aid people whose schedule may change periodically and affect their ability to use the vanpool. The majority of the incentives are geared towards the drivers and backup drivers. The requirements for driving are acknowledged as being extensive. These in combination with the responsibility and "stress" of driving in the Chicago area have been viewed as reasons why people chose not to become drivers. In an effort to entice people to become drivers they do not charge a fare, or in the case of backup drivers charge a reduced fare. Drivers also receive 300 personal miles a month. While there is not an incentive for collecting and submitting NTD data, there is a fee associated with not submitting the data.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

The Pace program has been collecting NTD data since the early 1990s. Data is collected by each vanpool driver and submitted to Pace. Pace prefers to receive submission in an electronic format as an email attachment, but does have some vanpools who submit through fax or mail. Data collected is then entered by program staff and validated. This is accomplished by perform spot checks on vans to verify mileage. In addition, Pace receives mileage reports on vehicles through their fuel card program and maintenance program. Reports are compared to previous month's reports to identify any changes in trends. Reporting is ensured through the use of fees that are assessed if a report is not submitted on time. The interviewee did not know what percentage of vanpools submit their data on time.

Pace does have a few vanpools that start or in a non-UZA zone or a smaller UZA zone. Since all the vans are operated by Pace and either start or end in UZA zone 3, the mileage is attributed to this zone. This zone includes most of the six county area including Chicago. Capital costs associated with the vans are also tracked as part of the CMAQ grant process. This information is reported on the F-20 form. Operating costs are tracked through the use of fuel cards and the maintenance program. These costs are submitted on form F-30. Funding that is received as a result of reporting vanpool data is received with all the 5307 funding by the regional transportation authority. This agency then determines how the monies are dispersed to the regional agencies.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

N/A

The Rideshare Company, Hartford, Connecticut

Ms. Jan Mello, Vice President Operations; Mr. Michael Lenkiewicz, Vice President Finance and Treasurer; and Kathy Naples, Customer Service Manager
Interview Date: October 6, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 531 (As of Interview)

Program Type: Private, Non-profit

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Rideshare Company (Rideshare) began as a broker for public transportation in Connecticut in 1980. In 1987 they started a vanpool program that became the *East Street* vanpool network in 1995. They currently provide vanpools in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York. Funding for the program comes primarily from the fares collected from vanpool riders. These cover the operating costs for the service. Capital costs for vans are handled using private loans. In addition, they receive approximately $1 million in CMAQ funds that go toward marketing and outreach for both the vanpool program and the commuting options program.

The program began collecting NTD data when they started providing vanpools. Initially, data collection for NTD was a challenge to collect accurately. Improvements have resulted in proprietary software that collects much of the data with outputs that can go straight to NTD without much manipulation. They have also employed a NTD approved sampling method. The sampling methodology was developed with assistance from the University of South Florida. This method has resulted in data that is more accurate and manageable than previous methods employed.

The vanpool program currently has 531 vans. Some employers in the region have as many as 100 vanpools associated traveling to them. There is no defined limit in the number of vanpools the program can grow to, but access to available capital could be a limiting factor. An exact number of FTEs that are associated with the vanpool program could not be given because of the different functions done by Rideshare. The agency has four senior management staff, four customer service staff, four finance staff, six business development staff, and five operations staff. There is no public agency staff associated with this program.

Challenges that were cited by Rideshare dealt with changes in commuting patterns. The emergence of telecommuting as a viable option for employees and the push by many agencies to have more staff telecommute has created challenges to keeping a van full throughout the course of a work week. Rideshare has started allowing part-time riders for their vanpools. This allows them to fill empty seats that have been vacated a couple days a week while also improving the program experience for those who telecommute a couple days a week by not charging them for days not commuted by van.

Vanpools are formed a variety of different ways. Sometimes individuals will contact Rideshare to be matched with an existing vanpool. Rideshare business development and outreach staff will meet with companies that have expressed an interest in forming a vanpool or have been identified as a potential target for forming a vanpool. Occasionally, groups will come to Rideshare that are ready to form a vanpool and have the required number of individuals. All interested parties need to submit the appropriate paperwork to be accepted into the program. Drivers require additional paperwork and requirements above what a rider would require. Rideshare remains involved with vanpools and riders once they have been accepted in the program. Their customer service representatives handle day-to-day complaints and issues as they arise.

Fares are assessed on an individual basis by Rideshare. The fare charged is based on the number of riders in the vanpool and the distance traveled. Vanpools in New York are charged a slightly higher fare because of the added insurance requirements. Fare collection can occur a number of different ways. Riders can have the fair debited from their account directly, can mail the check in, or hand the check to the driver to send to Rideshare.

OPERATIONS

Rideshare owns all the vans used in the program. They utilize two van types; a seven passenger minivan and a larger passenger van capable of carrying 12 or 15 riders. Vehicle maintenance is handled through contracts with third party vendors. Rideshare is responsible for scheduling the maintenance and ensuring that there is a loaner van available. Rideshare will remind vanpool drivers when it is getting close to scheduled maintenance intervals, but it is up to the vanpool driver to report unscheduled maintenance issues.

Rideshare can monitor usage of the vehicle through GPS units installed on each vehicle. This allows them to identify issues with speeding or other safety concerns. Rideshare reported that there are few issues with drivers following rules. They do have a “three strikes” policy on speeding that results in the driver no longer being able to drive the van. Drivers are the only applicants who must submit to a check in addition to submitting their application. A driver’s driving record is checked annually at a minimum, and in some instances may be checked more frequently. Drivers are also asked to inform rideshare of changed in their driving record between checks. They reported that this practice does not occur often.

Rideshare handles requests for ADA by attempting to accommodate the request and also referring the individual to the area’s paratransit provider. This allows the person making a request to investigate other options for travel and make a decision about which is best suited to their needs. In the past they have received few requests for ADA accommodations and those that have been made were accommodated by Rideshare.

All the vehicles operated as part of the Easystreet program are branded with a program logo, phone number, and website. They view this practice as a great way to market the program to potential customers as well as a means to monitor driving behavior. Improper driving behavior can be reported by the public. Instances where this has occurred will result in a call to the vanpool as well as a follow up with the initial caller.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

Rideshare provides typical vanpool incentives to their vanpools. This includes emergency rides home up to four times a year when unexpected situations arise. Drivers for each vanpool receive personal miles as a benefit. Those driving a large van receive 150 personal miles and those driving the minivan receive

250 miles. The minivan personal miles are higher to offset the fact that the drivers of the larger vans are not charged a fare. Other benefits of the program include no-cost maintenance to the driver, fuel cards, loaner vans, roadside assistance, and insurance. There is a cash bonus for referring riders to the program. Subsidies offered come from the federal government, the state government, or an employer. The state of New York provides a subsidy to offset the additional cost of insurance for operating in New York.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

Rideshare has been collecting and reporting NTD data since the program started in 1987. Data is collected using a sampling method that meets NTD requirements. Those drivers selected to report collect the data manually and submit it to Rideshare. Rideshare staff then enter the data into their proprietary software and submit reports to NTD.

Allocation of miles is determined by Rideshare. Rideshare determines which UZA a route should be associated with and will split the mile accordingly based on their assessment. Capital and operating costs are easily reports because Rideshare incurs all the costs. Their software accounts for both capital and operating costs and exports it in a format that translates into the NTD reporting requirement.

Rideshare does not receive any 5307 funds from any of the states they operate service in. They feel that the 5307 funds that are earned based on their vanpool program and dispersed to each state are a furtherance of their mission to improve transportation and quality of life for commuters.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

N/A

Valley Metro, Phoenix, Arizona

Mr. Gary Roberts, Vanpool Coordinator
Interview Date: October 7, 2010

Number of Vanpools: 323 (As of Interview)

Program Type: Public oversight of a contractor

PROGRAM HISTORY AND HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Valley Metro vanpool program began in 1990. The program was started through a RFP for vanpool services that was awarded to People Rideshare Systems. The current services are provided by VPSI. Funding initially came from an Air Quality Grant awarded by the Arizona DOT. The current funding for the program comes from multiple sources. Operations are funded through the fares collected from those using the vanpool. VPSI collected the fares and removes the agreed upon fixed costs and the remaining monies come to Valley Metro. Funding for capital comes from a combination of 5307 funds, FHWA Surface Transportation Program funds, Job Access Reverse Commute funds, and Public Transportation Funds. The Public Transportation Funds are apportioned revenues from a half cent sales tax that was enacted by voters.

The vanpool program is part of the operations department at Valley Metro, which is the regional public transportation authority for Phoenix. Valley Metro is a political subdivision of the state of Arizona formed by a legislative action of the State legislature and supported by a half-cent sales tax in Maricopa County. The program currently contains 323 active vanpools. This figure is down from approximately 400 vanpools prior to the economic downtown in 2008. Valley Metro has no limit on the number of vanpools they can have in the program. The program only utilizes one public agency staff member. The vanpool coordinator is in charge of running the program and overseeing the contractor. The contractor has one manager and four account representatives to handle the vanpool program. In total there are six FTEs that handle day-to-day tasks associated with the vanpool program. VPSI has the administrative service contract, and is therefore responsible for billing, providing insurance and maintenance, setting up and terminating all vanpools, and act as the primary point of contact.

Vanpool advertising for Valley Metro is not a media intensive production. Vehicles are branded with the program phone number. This has been viewed as one of the best ways to reach the general public. The biggest activity to market vanpool services has been mouth to mouth between existing vanpoolers and those who are interested. When an interested party calls Valley Metro to form a vanpool, they must have a minimum of six riders to form a vanpool. Three people need to volunteer to be drivers. Once the vanpool is setup an individual or employer needs to become the financially responsible party for the vanpool. This persons or entity will receive the monthly invoice. Vanpool fares are based on number of riders and mileage traveled. The financially responsible party is in charge of collecting fares and submitting those to Valley Metro. Currently, a ride matching service is provided using Rideshark. This service allows people to indentify seats open in a vanpool by route. Rideshark will be populated each month with the terms, new starts, and driver switches.

OPERATIONS

Valley Metro owns all the vans in the fleet. They provide nine and fifteen passenger bench seat vans as well as eight and fourteen passenger individual seat vans. They also own two wheelchair lift equipped vehicles for use by vanpoolers. These two vans are owned to meet their ADA requirements. Each vanpool is responsible for maintaining a clean van. VPSI is tasked with creating a formal maintenance program to handle scheduled and unscheduled maintenance. It is the responsibility of each vanpool to notify VPSI when an unscheduled maintenance issue arises.

Prior to acceptance into a vanpool there must be three people who agree to drive. Between the three who agree, one person becomes the primary driver and two become alternates. Each driver submits to a review of their driving record for the past seven years. In addition the person identified as the responsible financial party receives a credit check.

Valley Metro ensures that vans that have open seats accept riders through counseling on Title VI when necessary. The vanpools are open to anyone when a seat is available as long as the van doesn't require a change in its route, a new stop, or the times it travels.

INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDY

Valley Metro does not subsidize any of the vanpools. They do offer up to 300 personal miles to the driver of the vanpool. Every rider can take up to two emergency taxi rides home for unexpected needs a year. Valley Metro also suggests to each vanpool that the driver be allowed to ride fare free as compensation for taking the responsibility of driving. Maricopa County has an ordinance that has been helping promote the use of alternative transportation including vanpools. The County ordinance has set a goal for reducing trips and mandates that any employer with 50 or more employees needs to contribute to trip reduction. The goal for each employer is to have 60 percent of their employees using alternative forms of transportation. Vanpooling has received more attention from employers as a result of the ordinance.

NTD REPORTING AND DIVISION OF 5307 FUNDS

NTD reporting is done by each vanpool. At the beginning of the month the driver submits a ridership chart of daily riders online. Changes to the ridership chart can be made by the driver. Valley Metro keeps track of the mileage associated with the route and uses that in their NTD submission. Weekly, a vanpool is selected at random to submit a survey of daily activity. This is used as a check to ensure proper reporting is being done. Valley Metro reported that they don't have a large issue with vanpools not reporting. The consequences for not reporting will be termination of the vanpool.

NTD reporting of financial information is pulled from existing agency reports. These are reported per NTD's recommendation. Division of NTD reporting is not necessary because there is only one UZA for the region. All the monies received to the authorized recipient come back to the Phoenix area and are then allocated based on a formula.

INDEPENDENT OWNER/OPERATORS

N/A

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

- External Contractor Operator RFPs
- Vanpool Participant Application
- Vanpool Participant Agreements
- Vanpool Participant Manuals/Participant Guidelines
- Vanpool Participant Withdrawal Forms
- Vanpool Program FAQs
- Child Rider Agreements
- New Vanpool Formation Checklists
- Excel-based NTD Reporting Documents
- Manual NTD Reporting Documents
- Fare charts
- Vanpool Newsletters
- Vanpool Photos
- Vanpool Survey Results