

# Getting There: Vanpool Alliance turning commuter data into funds for localities

BY SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Monday, March 28, 2016 12:00 am

A federal vanpool program aimed at collecting data and generating funding opportunities for localities seems to be doing well.

And Fredericksburg-area commuters are leading the way.

In late 2013, Vanpool Alliance was created to run the federal program for two dozen localities in Virginia and Maryland. Fredericksburg and the counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, Culpeper and Fauquier are participants.

Vanpool operators who collect the data get \$200 per month for each van.

In turn, the federal program is expected to generate upwards of \$6 million a year, which would be available to participating localities.

The program has generated \$1.8 million that can be allocated in fiscal year 2017, according to a recent report by Vanpool Alliance. For the following fiscal year, Vanpool Alliance estimates the program will generate \$4.7 million.

There are now 510 vans and nearly 6,100 riders in the program.

More than 300 vans in the program originate from our region, with Stafford and Spotsylvania accounting for most of them (about 280).

Since the program's inception, participating vanpools have:

- Covered 101 million miles.
- Logged 2.1 million passenger trips, consistently reaching more than 110,000 trips per month.
- Reduced single-rider-vehicle trips by 86 million miles.

Dear Scott: Twice, in downtown Fredericksburg, I have been in the left lane on Princess Anne Street when someone next to me in the right lane has turned left in front of me, to head down Hanover Street.

Both streets are one way.

Has the city considered marking the pavement with (for example) a straight or left arrow in the left lane, and a straight arrow only in the right lane?

Hope this makes sense.

— Penny A Parrish, Stafford

It certainly would make sense, if people who drive like that actually paid attention to signs and street markings.

The drivers making those dangerous turns already are ignoring traffic in the left lane. So it's a safe bet that they will pay no attention to the crosswalk or pedestrian crossing sign there, either.

Did you know, by the way, that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says 94 percent of crashes are caused by drivers' "unsafe behaviors"?

Driving, like life itself, is a gamble.

The best we as drivers can do is pay attention so, like Penny Parrish, we can avoid being caught up in that 94 percent.