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## **EASE YOUR RIDE - SHARE THE DRIVE**

August is Carpool/Vanpool Month in North Texas

*July 31, 2006* (Arlington) – Drivers looking to ease the strain of rising gas prices or increased traffic congestion need only look next door or down the hall for relief.

Ridesharing can save 500 gallons of gasoline a year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. At \$3 per gallon, that's a savings of \$1,500 a year.

August is Carpool/Vanpool Month in North Texas, and the Clean Air Coalition is encouraging commuters to try sharing their drives through carpools or vanpools.

Ridesharing can save money on fuel, insurance, and car maintenance. It can also reduce time spent on the road, because carpools and vanpools can use High-Occupancy Vehicle lanes. When they're not behind the wheel, carpoolers/vanpoolers can read, nap, or chat during their commute, reducing stress. And ridesharing helps reduce air pollution, fuel consumption, traffic congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions.

"Rideshare has so many advantages," says Brenda A. Gee, an employee of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company. "We don't have to fight for a parking space and we are well relaxed and refreshed upon arriving to work." Gee has been carpooling for 21 years.

Gee and her colleagues travel at least 30 miles each day to and from work, leaving home early in the morning and returning home after 6:00 at night. "We save mileage and maintenance on our cars," Gee adds, "There is no walking to your cars in the heat in the summer, or cold in the winter. Because we have a designated driver, we can have short nap before we arrive home, read the latest news, listen to the radio, or participate in the conversation of the day with our fellow employees. Who would not want to vanpool?"

Using the HOV lanes enables these commuters to avoid rush hour slowdowns and reduce travel times. Currently there are HOV lanes open on Interstate Highway 30 (East R. L. Thornton Freeway), I. H. 35E (Stemmons Freeway), I. H. 635 (LBJ Freeway), I. H. 35E (South R. L. Thornton Freeway), and U.S. 67 (Marvin D. Love Freeway). More details are provided on the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Web site, [www.dart.org](http://www.dart.org).

## How Does Ridesharing Work?

There are three basic types of rideshare arrangements:

- Carpoolers can use one car owned by one driver. The riders and driver agree to an amount paid periodically to the driver, to cover operating costs for the daily commute.
- Carpoolers can rotate car use so that each person's vehicle and driving time is shared equally. No money is exchanged in this arrangement.
- Carpoolers can use a van owned by a local transit agency, such as DART or The T. Typically six to 15 people can share a ride, dividing the monthly vehicle fee among all riders.

Carpoolers/vanpoolers can also make arrangements to meet at park-and-ride locations to begin their shared ride. There are several park-and-ride locations throughout the Metroplex. There are seven park-and-ride lots along the LBJ Freeway alone. There are also almost 20 park-and-ride locations within the DART service area, making it easier to use DART transportation services. Another strategic location for park-and-ride lots is near HOV lanes, enabling people to form rideshares at the park-and-ride lots and access the HOV lanes for quicker travel. Also, there are two park-and-ride lots in the Fort Worth Transportation Authority's service area, and two in Arlington.

## Starting a Carpool/Vanpool

If you are interested in carpooling or vanpooling, check first around your neighborhood and your worksite. You may find someone who works and lives close by and works similar hours. If you can't find anyone this way, DART and The T offer free ride-matching. Call DART at (214) 749-RIDE or the T at (817) 336-RIDE.

## Get Rewards

Drivers who try ridesharing are eligible to enter The Commuter Challenge, an Internet contest that rewards North Texas commuters who carpool, vanpool, bring a sack lunch, telecommute, or take the bus or train to work.

To enter the contest, commuters need only share the ride to work or school, cut out trips by eating lunch at the office, or telecommute. By simply logging on to [www.tryparkingit.com](http://www.tryparkingit.com) to document which commute solution they chose and how many miles they saved, drivers become eligible to win prizes. Each entry increases the odds of winning one of many great prizes.

The grand-prize winner will receive a \$1,000 ELFA space make-over from The Container Store. Other prizes include:

- \$500 debit cards, provided by the North Texas Clean Air Coalition
- Portable DVD players, provided by Holcim (Texas) LP
- \$500 Best Buy gift card, provided by TXI
- iPod nano 4GB and accessories, provided by Ash Grove Texas, L.P.

- iPod nano 4GB and accessories, provided by Carrington, Coleman, Sloman & Blumenthal, L.L.P.
- Free Oil Changes for One Year, provided by Firestone Complete Auto Care

**About the North Texas Clean Air Coalition**

The North Texas Clean Air Coalition was formed in 1993 to educate North Texans about air quality and encourage individuals to “do their share for cleaner air.” Members of the coalition include the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the North Texas Commission, the Greater Dallas Chamber, the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, the Denton County Transportation Authority, and numerous individuals, cities and businesses.

During the region’s ozone season (May – October), the North Texas Clean Air Coalition promotes alternatives to drive-alone commuting through advertising, employer outreach, e-mail campaigns, media relations and the Web-based Commuter Challenge.

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