



the way to **go!**

RideOn
1st Edition 2009
Vanpool Newsletter



From all of us to all of you, best wishes for a very

2008 – Highlights of the year!

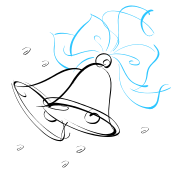
- A successful Vanpool Survey in May
- **The state's first**-ever high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes opened May 3 to State Route 167 drivers
- A vanpool fare increase – first one in over two years
- Surreal fuel prices – extreme highs followed by unexpected lows
- Inquiries from 200 customers wanting to start new vanpools, with very limited supply
- The bi-annual Commute Times Audit in October
- Catalytic converter thefts to Pierce Transit vans and our vanpool customer's personal vehicles
- The 44th presidential and local government elections
- Snow, snow, and more snow for several days creating a winter wonderland commute!

What Might 2009 Have In Store?

- Unfortunately, no additional vans to add to our fleet
- Increased opportunity to provide rides to new customers on existing vanpools
- Updates to our Vanpool Participant Reference Manual
- Hopefully, peace and a stronger economy!

Wedding Bells!

We wish warm congratulations to vanpool coordinator Kim Straub, who married in December and took a new name – Kim Pontsler. Her email address is now kpontsler@piercettransit.org. Please make a note of this change if Kim is your vanpool coordinator.



Welcome to MilitaryRideShare.com

The first of its kind website with the sole purpose to help military members find others heading in the same direction is now available at <http://www.militaryrideshare.com>. You will be able to post if you need a ride or if you are willing to offer a ride from any base in the contingent United States. These services are free. Rideshareonline.com and Piercetrips.com are also still available.



Volunteer Drivers' Digest

Don't pass gas! You no longer have to pass gas as you drive by the Conoco 76 stations. We grant permission to once again fuel at these stations. This should be good news to some of you who have a Conoco 76 station along your commute route.

To shield or not to shield - that is the question. Watch those transponders and shields on spare vans. When you get in a spare van and you normally commute across the Narrows Bridge...make sure that the transponder can be read and that your spare van does not have the shield covering it. If you do not cross the bridge but do use the HOV lanes on 167, please make sure that the shield covers the transponder. The group that had that spare before you may have had a different commute and you want to make sure the transponder or shield is available for your commute needs.



Please clean up after yourself. When asked to swap or return vans in exchange for another, please clean your assigned van, inside as well as outside, and vacuum it and wipe up spills, etc. This will allow us to turn the van over in tiptop shape to the next group. You would not want to get a dirty van with gum in ashtrays and stains on the carpet. Thanks for your attention to maintaining a clean van, for your current riders, Pierce Transit, and the next group who may receive the van you have now.

Change in route? We noticed quite a few route changes on the Commute Times Audit you completed for us. Please notify your vanpool coordinator *any time* you need to add or delete a stop on your route. You cannot arbitrarily eliminate a stop if it affects a rider. If you wish to add a stop that adds time or miles, the entire vanpool group must agree to the change, as well as Pierce Transit. Thanks for keeping us in the loop on route and overnight location changes you intend to make.

Check, Check, Triple Check! From time to time, please visit the current vanpool groups listing at <http://www.piercetransit.org/rideshare/vplist.html> and scroll down to your destination city to locate your group info. Let us know if we need to update your public contact info, work shift, or stops.

Reminders from the WSDOT website wsdot.wa.gov

Washington State Department of Transportation offers some great driving tactics for our winter conditions. Their slogan Ice and Snow, Take it Slow – reminds us about slower speed, slower acceleration, slower steering, and slower braking. Give yourself extra time to reach your destination safely. It is not worth putting yourself and others in a dangerous situation just to save time. Finally, if you do not feel comfortable driving the van, do not. Do make sure your group has a backup carpool plan, and updated phone numbers, so that riders can coordinate a backup carpool if necessary. Better yet, plan that backup carpool plan now, so you are ready next time. Reference your Vanpool Participant Reference Manual for more info.



Before you get in the van:

- Brush snow off the top of the van as well as the windows and headlights. Every van is equipped with a long handled snow scraper. If you do not do this, chunks of snow can slide down your windshield when you slow or stop, blocking your vision, and that of other drivers around you.

When driving:

- Drive with your headlights on.
- Drive for conditions.

- Trucks take longer to stop. Do not cut in front of them.
- Avoid abrupt actions while steering, braking or accelerating to lessen the chances of losing control of the vehicle.
- Stopping on snow and ice without skidding requires extra time and distance. If you have anti-lock brakes, like our vans have, press the pedal down firmly and hold it. If you do not have anti-lock brakes, gently pump the pedal. Either way, give yourself plenty of room to stop.
- Winter road conditions often result in longer stopping distances. Drivers should allow additional room between their vehicles and others. Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges or shady spots. These all have potential to develop black ice that makes driving hazardous.
- Avoid using cruise control or overdrive. Do not let your car make a bad decision for you.

New record for SR 167 HOT lanes

Have you noticed that more drivers are choosing to buy their way out of gridlock by paying to use the HOT lanes SR167? According to the Washington State Department of Transportation, the number of drivers using these (HOT) lanes hit an all-time high a month ago. Figures show 1,721 drivers chose to pay a toll to escape traffic jams on Nov. 6. The previous record of 1,555 toll transactions was set a week before that on Oct. 30.

Volunteer Bookkeepers' Briefs

The Boeing Company employees can now select Direct Pay via WageWorks. To change your election from vouchers, or to set up Direct Pay for the first time, vanpoolers need to know their Group Identification Number (GIN) and key this number into their WageWorks profile in two fields. The GIN is NOT your van number. Ask your vanpool coordinator for your GIN and pass it along to your riders. Riders can now Go Green— save paper and have vanpool fares paid directly to us. A WageWorks customer service representative at 877-WageWorks (877.924.3967) can assist Boeing employees with setting up Direct Pay.

Use our current report forms please. If you are not using the version dated 10/1/2008, please download the revised forms from <http://www.piercetransit.org/rideshare/vpreports.xls> and use them going forward. We updated the personal use mileage rate on the forms to \$.40 from \$.33. Please use the revised forms for consistency.

Write legibly and neatly if completing the reports manually. We are not the only ones who read these reports. Some of your employers get copies of the reports. Our accounting office and even the Washington State auditors have the privilege of reading and interpreting the data. Complete all fields, including participant types and roles, month and date, etc.

Be careful keying in data into electronic report. Pay attention when transferring data from a hand written Ridership report to the electronic report. Accurate data is very important.

Free to go is still free. It's back by popular demand, with one change. New riders must take all five rides within a 30-day period. Watch for the revised Free to go certificate coming to volunteer bookkeepers this week.

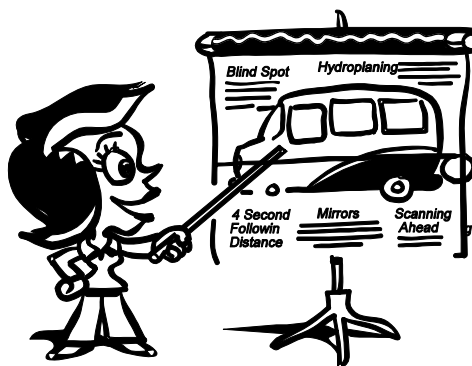


Upcoming Defensive Driving Orientation and Bookkeeping Classes

Jan. 24	Saturday	8 a.m. – Noon
Feb. 4	Wednesday	4 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Feb. 21	Saturday	8 a.m. – Noon

Defensive Driving/Orientation classes are listed above. Each class must have a minimum of five Pierce Transit volunteer applicants registered. We generally hold Bookkeeper classes from 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. on these Wednesdays and from Noon – 1 p.m. on these Saturdays.

We must receive all applications at least one week prior to the date of the class in order to pre-approve and schedule you for that training.



An online vanpool defensive driving refresher course sponsored by the Washington State Transit Insurance Pool (WSTIP) is available to all active volunteer vanpool drivers. Please contact your Pierce Transit Vanpool Coordinator if you are interested.

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Online Ridematch RideshareOnline.com

Heidi Hunter and Kim Pontsler, Editors: We distribute our newsletter bi-monthly with several issues retained on our web site at piercetransit.org. Thanks for article suggestions and letters to the editor.