

# VantagePoint

May – June 2012



## Dump the Pump

JUNE 21, 2012 SAVE MONEY. RIDE TRANSIT.

On Thursday, June 21, 2012, join us in celebrating the seventh Annual Dump the Pump Day – a day all about leaving our cars at home and choosing a smart commute.

Vanpooling saves you money, and reduces pollution and congestion. Did you also know that public transportation use reduces our nation's dependence on foreign oil by 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline a year, and saves 37 million metric tons of carbon emissions annually? One person with a 20-mile round trip commute who switches from driving to public transit can reduce his or her daily carbon emissions by 20 pounds, or more than 4,800 pounds in a year\*. And vanpool is the most cost-effective form of public transportation in the United States — it is even less expensive than riding the bus.

In the interest of using public resources wisely and encouraging smart commute habits, we strongly encourage vanpoolers to ride at least fifty percent of the time. On National Dump the Pump Day, let's fill those vans and go for 100%!

With climate change affecting us all and gas prices at record highs, dumping the pump (on a regular basis) becomes even more important in our mission to reduce pollution, congestion and our carbon footprint, save money, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

How much carbon can you save by using public transportation? Check out the fuel savings and carbon calculators at [www.publictransportation.org](http://www.publictransportation.org).

Please encourage your friends and coworkers to consider bypassing the use or purchase of fuel on Thursday June 21, the seventh annual National Dump the Pump Day. Fuel is over \$4 per gallon and rising. Choose to bus it, vanpool, carpool, bike, or walk this day. And bookkeepers, this is the perfect chance to offer those [five free vanpool rides](#)! Anyone who hasn't ridden a Pierce Transit vanpool in the last year is eligible.

*\*Statistics provided by the American Public Transportation Association.*

**Vantage Point is a publication of Pierce Transit.**

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*Please consider the environment before printing this newsletter.*



# MAY IS BIKE MONTH



## Bike Month News & Info

### May 1 - 31

It's Bike Month – time to dust off that helmet, pump up your tires and bike to work!

Bike to School Day..... May 9  
Bike to Work Week.....May 14 – 18  
Bike to Work Day..... May 18

A four-mile trip by bicycle instead of car keeps about 15 pounds of pollutants out of the air we breathe. This month, pedal to the Park & Ride to catch your vanpool. Pierce Transit does not provide bike racks; however, bike lockers are available at some Park & Rides and at most Transit Centers, for a nominal fee. For locker locations, visit [Pierce Transit Park & Rides](#).

If you work in Pierce County, you can sign up to participate in the [PierceTrips Bike Commuter Challenge](#). Log at least five trips during the month of May and be entered to win great prizes including a \$200 REI gift certificate, bike tune-ups, light sets and team pizza parties. A \$100 REI gift certificate will be awarded to the man, woman, and college student who logs the most cycling miles in the month of May.

~ Sponsored by REI

Work outside of Pierce County? Check out [wsdot.wa.gov/bike/toworkmonth.htm](http://wsdot.wa.gov/bike/toworkmonth.htm) for bike month events, rewards and more.

Bicycling – a healthy and fuel-free commute option – is the craze this month!



Here's an interesting bit of bike trivia...

On Vashon Island, a tree grows carrying a rather unusual passenger – an old bike. Legend has it that decades ago, a child chained his bike to the tree and never picked it up. Undeterred, the tree grew around the bike.

Author Berkeley Breathed, creator of the *Bloom County* comic strip, resided on Vashon for some time, and wrote a children's book inspired by the bicycle-eating tree entitled, Red Ranger Came Calling.

## Share the Road

As a bicyclist, you have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists, including the right to ride in the traffic lane. Bicyclists must follow the same laws as motorized vehicles: ride in the same direction as vehicle traffic (keeping to the right), obey posted signs and traffic lights, and signal your intentions. Obey the rules of the road at all times.



Motorists: Share the road and treat bicyclists respectfully. Leave a 3- to 5-foot clearance between your vehicle and the bicyclist and pass the cyclist only when safe to do so. When parked, be careful not to open a door in the path of a cyclist.



# JUNE IS NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH

Each June, the National Safety Council (NSC) encourages organizations to participate in National Safety Month. Each week carries a theme highlighting critical safety issues. The June 24-30 focus is **Drive Safely**.

The NSC reminds us that driving is one of the most dangerous activities we do each day. As we enter the summer months, traffic increases...and so does the chance of becoming involved in an accident. Also, during this period of changing seasons, we experience a mix of rainy and summerlike weather. Please continue to be extra vigilant and keep these safety tips in mind:

- **Watch for pedestrians**, especially in rainy weather. Umbrellas and hoods might keep them from seeing you.
- **Drive cautiously**. The first drops of rain cause roads to be slick.
- **Avoid driving through big puddles**. Brakes can be affected by the large amount of water and cause you to skid. Or, the splash may block the vision of other drivers, causing them to brake or swerve.
- **Watch the road** to see if the vehicle ahead of you is leaving tire tracks on the wet roadway. If it is, follow in those tracks if you can. If it's not, reduce your speed to help prevent hydroplaning.
- **Keep your sunglasses handy** for those afternoon sunbreaks of bright sunshine and glare on the roadways.
- **Don't drive if you're tired**. We love summer for its late-evening sunlight. However, this is also the prime time of the year to stay up too late. If you're tired, share the driving.
- **Be aware of motorcyclists and bicyclists** – their narrower profile is easy to miss. Check side and rearview mirrors often to stay fully aware of your driving surroundings. Signal and lean forward in your seat while checking side mirrors before you change lanes.

## On-time Service

If you are the maintenance contact for your vanpool group, you've received requests from vanpool coordinators Tammy Apthorp or Kim McGilvery to bring your van in for regular service. Ever notice that they ask you to bring the van to Pierce Transit within two business days? There's good reason...

Long story short, servicing our vans on time (within 5 months or 5,000 miles, whichever occurs first) means a safer vehicle for your commute. In addition, we recently lowered our spare van ratio so we could increase the number of vehicles assigned to groups. It's a great payoff that means fewer spare vans to go around and requires very timely servicing of vehicles. To help us service all groups' vans on time, it's important that all 293 of our groups deliver their vans here as promptly as possible when notified.

Want an idea of when we'll call you in? Keep an eye on the oil change sticker in the top driver's side area of the windshield. Thanks for helping us provide you with the most well-maintained, safest vehicles possible.



## Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is a huge safety issue. We've all seen someone driving down the road applying makeup, correcting a child or juggling phone and coffee while their knees do the steering.

Everyone knows not to use their cell phone or text while driving...however, actually abiding by that state law (and PT policy) is sometimes another story.

Check out this link for some handy advice on avoiding driving distractions:  
[distracteddrivinghelp.com/distracted-driving](http://distracteddrivinghelp.com/distracted-driving)

Stay focused...stay safe!



One more very excellent reason to complete a thorough pre-trip inspection of your van before driving.

Thanks for sharing, Susan Suther!

# HAPPENINGS



## Congestion Relief for JBLM

### WSDOT grant provides 20 new vans!

We are very excited to announce that starting this summer, Pierce Transit will roll out 20 brand new vans to vanpool groups heading to JBLM for their commute. This amazing opportunity became available to us as part of a competitive grant through Washington State Department of Transportation. The grant is aimed specifically at easing congestion in the I-5 corridor near and around JBLM.

Since 2003, population has boomed in Pierce and Thurston counties, drastically increasing traffic on the I-5 corridor between Olympia and Tacoma. In 2010, I-5 commuters headed north from Lacey found themselves sitting in 9-mile backups that doubled or tripled their morning commute time.

Over the last couple of years, a lot has been done to help mitigate traffic along this busy corridor, including the addition of new WSDOT traffic cameras and ramp meters, as well as on-base traffic flow improvements. The 20 new vanpool vans are part of that continuing strategy.

If you work at JBLM or Camp Murray and are interested in learning more about starting a vanpool group, contact Kim Pontsler or Lynne Cunningham at 253.983.2724 or 253.983.3321, respectively. Or email us at [vanpool@piercetransit.org](mailto:vanpool@piercetransit.org).



## Vanpool Survey

### Tell us what you think.

Vanpool customers, watch your email in May. We will be sending our vanpool survey electronically to all participants who have an email address on file with us.

This is a perfect opportunity to tell us what you think about our service...What do you love? What would you like us to change? We want to know.

## Overnight Parking

### Get it approved.

Found a great new overnight parking location? There are vans already parked there, so it must be OK...right? Well, maybe.

Please be sure to get approval from the site manager AND your vanpool coordinator before changing your overnight parking location. Just because another van is parked there doesn't mean it's approved.

## Bookkeeping Tips

Bookkeeper, struggling to submit your reports on time? Try this...

- 25<sup>th</sup> of each month: Poll riders – who's on the van next month?
- 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of each month: Advise riders how much they owe for upcoming month.
- 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> of each month: Collect fares for upcoming month.
- 1<sup>st</sup> of each month: Complete reports and submit to Pierce Transit.

More tips:

- Make your job easier – download our [electronic reports](#). They include formulas that do the calculating for you!
- If you mail reports, post them by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month to ensure delivery to Pierce Transit by the 10<sup>th</sup>.

# News & Reminders

## VANPOOL

**24/7 Emergency**  
253.381.3762

**Direct Line**  
253.983.3377  
7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Vanpool Fax**  
253.984.8227

**Vanpool@piercetransit.org**

## RIDESHARE

**RideshareOnline.com**  
1.888.814.1300

## PIERCE TRANSIT

**Customer Services**  
253.581.8000

**Toll Free**  
1.800.562.8109

**TDD Customer Service**  
253.582.7951

**Piercetransit.org**

## Gas Station Heads up...

Depending on individual gas station policies, you may be asked to answer an additional security question when using the Voyager card: *What is your billing zip code?*

The answer: 98496.

This has nothing to do with Voyager or Pierce Transit policies and procedures. It is simply a measure some gas stations have taken recently to protect against fraud.

## Transit Conduct

For everyone's safety and comfort, we regulate conduct on our vehicles. In a nutshell, it's all about safety and respecting others. Here are a few of our rules of the road, which apply to all vanpools and can only be changed by Pierce Transit:

- **Seatbelts** must be worn while the van is in operation. Help out your drivers by happily doing this – we instruct them to not operate the van until all riders have properly fastened.
- **Tobacco** use is not permitted in any Pierce Transit vehicle. Smoking is not allowed within 25 feet of Pierce Transit property, including vanpool vans.
- **Cell phone** use (including wireless headsets) by volunteer drivers while operating the vehicle is strictly prohibited. Please ask another participant to answer your phone if it rings while you are driving the vehicle. Always pull over in a safe place before making or receiving a phone call.
- **Pets** are not permitted in the vanpool vehicle at any time, unless they are qualified service animals used by individuals with disabilities.

## Changing Your Group's Route?

**You have a choice.**

Pierce Transit works with brand new vanpool groups to establish a route and schedule. But what if some (or all) riders want to change the group route once it's established? Here's the lowdown...

**Scenario 1:** A new rider wants to join your vanpool group. The potential new rider's worksite is not a stop on the group's current route. What to do?

**Answer:** The current group must decide whether they are all willing to add the time and mileage required to make the additional stop. ALL members must agree to the change. If even one member does not want the change, it cannot happen. Pierce Transit does not require groups to change their established route or schedule to accommodate new riders.

**Scenario 2:** Your group's primary driver changes work locations. No one else wants to drive. Now what?

**Answer:** Since all groups must have a primary and backup driver, this group needs a volunteer to take on the primary driver role. If no one wishes to volunteer, the entire group can decide to accommodate the additional stop. This decision must be unanimous.

Any change in route or schedule cannot result in the elimination of a rider. Finally, once a route and schedule are established, they can only be changed with Pierce Transit's permission.