



# SUPPORTING COMMUTERS RETURNING TO WORKSITES DURING COVID-19

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VERSION 1

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## About the Association for Commuter Transportation

The Association for Commuter Transportation is the leading advocate for the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) industry and premier association for TDM professionals and organizations.

ACT strives to get the most out of our transportation system by empowering the people, places, and organizations working to advance TDM to improve the quality of life of commuters, enhance the livability of communities, and support economic growth.

**Learn more at  
[www.actweb.org](http://www.actweb.org)**

# INTRODUCTION

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The global pandemic brought on by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has had profound impacts on business operations. With public health authorities recommending physical distancing to reduce the spread of the virus, businesses across all sectors implemented emergency measures to protect their employees' health and adhere to local laws. For many businesses, this meant a complete closure of onsite operations and shifting employees from their worksites to their home, while a wide range of essential workers continued commuting.

As communities move forward with reopening their worksites, employees and employers will again need to address the challenge of commuting to and from work. While just 7% of US employers offered the option of telework prior to the pandemic, it is anticipated that many companies will continue to encourage some, if not all of their employees to work from home, at least part time, for the foreseeable future. However, many workers will need to return to their worksite, and there is a real possibility that personal health concerns could motivate commuters to drive alone, causing crippling congestion and wreaking havoc on air quality.

The Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) has developed the following recommendations to inform employers, commuters, and communities on how we can all get back to the workplace safely and efficiently. Prepared by a task force of transportation demand management (TDM) professionals representing service providers, employers, and government agencies, this handbook provides tips for managing many of the most common commute options during the current pandemic. TDM is the act of creating the most efficient multimodal transportation system that moves people with the goal of reducing congestion, improving air quality, and stimulating economic activity. TDM goals should be prioritized in the return to the workplace, balanced with concerns for personal health and welfare.





# INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, businesses should base all decisions on how and when to return to work on the guidance of local public health officials and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). It is anticipated that new recommendations will continue to be developed as lessons are learned, so we encourage you to keep up to date from those sources. Second, employers should continue to allow work-from-home eligible employees to do so. This will free up capacity within the transportation network and allow a safer and quicker commute for essential workers and others that are unable to work from home.

As your worksite and/or community begins to develop plans to return to the workplace, start by assessing the situation based on workplace geography, the specific needs of your commuters, the available infrastructure at your facilities (transit access, parking, bike racks, sidewalks, etc.), and if it is even necessary to return employees to the physical office or continue to allow them to work from home, so you can make the most appropriate decisions when reopening.

These recommendations will present tips and guidance specific to each mode, but there are common suggestions for employers, service providers, and commuters—no matter the mode.

## Public Health & Safety

- **Stay Home If You Are Sick:** If you are not feeling well, it's best to either take a sick day or work from home. Always follow the advice of your doctor or healthcare provider.
- **Maintain Physical Distancing:** Keep 6 feet or 2 meters apart from others to slow the spread of germs when possible.
- **Follow Health and Safety Guidelines:** Follow and communicate the World Health Organization (WHO), CDC, and local state and county guidelines to ensure safe commuting.
- **Protect Yourself & Others:** Protective equipment should be provided to drivers, and masks and/or face coverings should be worn by all commuters.
- **Follow Cleaning Standards:** All employers and service providers should share with the public and their customers their practices and procedures for safe cleaning of the workplace, common spaces, and vehicles (bus, train, shuttle, vanpool, carpool, etc.).
- **Communicate:** Keep in touch with employers and employees. Inform them of what is happening, and how you can help them return to the workplace safely.

# INTRODUCTION

## Support Employees by Providing

- **Fringe Benefits:** Implement or continue to provide qualified transportation fringe benefits to employees to reduce out of pocket expenses for public transit and vanpooling.
- **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Parking:** Provide preferential parking for carpools and vanpools.
- **Guaranteed Ride Home:** Provide access to a Guaranteed/Emergency Ride Home program to ensure all employees not driving alone can get home in the event of an emergency or schedule change.
- **Commute Assistance:** Work with a local, regional, or state commuter services organization or Transportation Management Association/Organization (TMA/O) to provide commute planning assistance to employees.

## Assess Interactions and Exposure Opportunities

- **Payment Method:** Seek ways to eliminate or minimize the need for physical payment or validation (employee passes, etc.) on board in favor of digital methods such as mobile payment or bookings.
- **Incentive Program:** Implement incentive program to increase engagement of employees to use non-SOV options.
- **Contact Tracing:** Being able to track the interactions of commuters, to know who travels with whom, is an important option to consider.
- **Pre-booking:** Consider demand responsive services in combination with pre-booking/reservations as a way of managing capacity to social distancing requirements and improving service efficiency.

## **Special thanks go to the following individuals for lending their time and expertise to the development of this resource:**

Nick Abel (Commute Seattle), Jessica Alba, TDM-CP (Stanford University), Michelle Althoff (Commute with Enterprise), Chris Arabia (VA Dept. of Rail and Public Transit), Stacey Burton (KIPDA), Thomas Cerny, TDM-CP (AECOM), Mark Cleveland (Hytch), Jim Gascoigne (Charles River TMA), Shuchi Gupta (Triangle J COG), Tom Harrington (Intuit), Edward Howard (TransLoc), Kaite Justice (Valley Regional Transit), Marie-France Laurin (Netlift), Bobby Lauterjung (Beeline Mobility), Connie McGee (Commute with Enterprise), David McMaster, TDM-CP (Houston Metro), Mark Melnyk (Starbucks), Halie Mitchell (VA DOT), Dezra Nauls (Houston Metro), Brian Nelson (ABC Companies), Bryan O'Connell (ABC Companies), Lisa Kay Pfannenstiel (Movability), Courtney Reynolds, TDM-CP (VHB), Lizzie Ryan (Scoop), Courtney Schultz (Charlotte Area Transit System), Lisa Kay Schweyer, TDM-CP (Carnegie Mellon University), Chris Simmons (Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority), Beth Snoke (The Ohio State University), Nicole Stern (Ada County Highway Department), Chris Vazquez (Pablito), Julia Wean (Steer)



# CARPOOL

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Organized or casual carpooling, typically with 1- 2 passengers in addition to a driver, offers comparatively low potential exposure risk for the shared commute. Carpooling deserves increased attention from employers as they develop plans for returning their employees to the workplace because exposure is limited and it's a flexible, scalable solution for commuters.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Provide Ridematching:** Participate in a local or regional carpool ridematching program that can help employees identify potential carpool partners based on origin, destination, and work schedule.
- 2 Consider Organized Carpooling:** Explore working with a carpooling organization that may provide ridematching, contactless payment options, and traceability to maximize the program's impacts.
- 3 Issue a Manager's Discussion Guide:** Understanding your employees' commuting concerns is key to unlocking employee sentiment on your organization's commuter plans. Set your managers up for success to have conversations on commute preferences with their team members to spread the word on carpooling options.
- 4 Prioritize Carpool Parking:** Provide low or no-cost preferential parking that incentivizes the use of carpooling.



# CARPOOL

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## Tips for Organizers/Providers

- 1 Limit Carpool Size:** Limit carpools to no more than one person per row of seats to create as much physical distance as possible in the car, and require passengers to sit diagonally from each other.
- 2 Collaborate With Other Transportation Providers:** Work with other mobility option providers to have a cohesive approach on transportation.
- 3 Limit Smaller Vehicles:** Do not allow two-seat vehicles to be used for carpooling.

## Tips for Commuters

- 1 Protect Yourself and Others:** Wear face coverings while in the vehicle.
- 2 Limit Carpool Size:** Limit carpools to no more than one person per row of seats to create as much physical distance as possible in the car.
- 3 Reduce Exposure:** Efforts should be made to ride with the same people each day and avoid “drop in” riders.
- 4 Limit Physical Contact:** Carpoolers should not have any physical contact with one another and should maintain appropriate physical distancing when entering and exiting the vehicle. Require passengers to sit diagonally from each other.



# PARKING

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Many are concerned that millions of additional commuters may drive alone when returning to their worksites. With this anticipated increase in driving alone, parking supply will be stretched, especially in urban centers and even suburban office parks. Implementing parking management practices that support a more efficient use of parking supply will be key to ensure that all commuters are able to get to their worksite. A goal for employers and communities should not be to meet the needs with increased parking supply, but to implement incentives and policies that reduce overall demand.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Change the Pricing Model:** Offer daily passes, rather than monthly passes to encourage employees to rethink how often they drive, which can reduce drive-alone rates and increase parking availability. Offer variable pricing by time of day that reduces the number of people commuting at the same time.
- 2 Prioritize Parking for Carpools/Vanpools:** Create and incentivize dedicated parking spaces for carpoolers and vanpoolers to reduce overall demand on parking supply.
- 3 Support Active Transportation:** Increase the availability of parking for bikes and scooters. Work with your local government to create or improve nearby sidewalks to provide better access to your facility.
- 4 Offer Parking Cash-Out:** Incentivize employees to use other commuting options that may be available to them by providing cash in lieu of a parking pass.
- 5 Reassign or Reserve Parking:** Turn parking spaces previously used by employees who can telework at least part-time into parking for employees who carpool/vanpool.



# PARKING

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## Tips for Providers

- 1 Eliminate Contact Payment:** Implement no contact payment solutions.
- 2 Change the Pricing Model:** Offer daily passes, rather than monthly passes, to encourage employees to rethink how often they drive, which can reduce drive-alone rates and increase parking availability. Offer variable pricing by time of day that reduces the number of people commuting at the same time.
- 3 Prioritize Parking for Carpools/Vanpools:** Create and incentivize dedicated parking spaces for carpoolers and vanpoolers to reduce overall demand on parking supply.
- 4 Reservations:** Implement same-day reservations on parking to reinforce inventory management and improved customer experience by providing information about flexible commute choices.
- 5 Provide Parking for Active Modes:** Improve accessibility by providing or adding dedicated parking for bicycles and scooters.
- 6 Coordinate With Property Owners:** Ensure consistent building entry protocols are followed if access to the building is available through the parking facility.

## Tips for Commuters:

- 1 Flex Your Working Hours:** Employers should shift their work schedule to spread out demand for shared parking resources.
- 2 Look Into Carpooling and Vanpooling:** Determine if there are designated or priority parking spaces available for such options.
- 3 Check Company Policy:** Familiarize yourself with any changes to parking policies and procedures prior to returning to the workplace.



# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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Public transportation has been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. While concerns may currently exist regarding health and safety, public transit will remain an essential mode for millions of people. Most public transit agencies have already adjusted their safety precautions and implemented physical distancing to protect both riders and operators. This has included restricting seating, requiring masks, and separating the entrance and exit of the vehicle, among other actions. Transitioning into the next phase will include additional efforts and engagement from public transit agencies, employers and riders.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Communicate:** Make sure your transit agency and your commuter assistance program are aware of your reopening timelines and how many employees will be coming back to the workplace. This can help create transit plans to better serve your worksite as service is brought back to the community.
- 2 Share Informational Materials:** Many agencies have changing schedules or standards that are only being posted online. By putting up the flyers with where to find that information, you are helping your employees find the information they need.
- 3 Provide Feedback:** If your business is hearing about issues with getting to your worksite, let your transit agency know. Real-time feedback on how new schedules, routes, and traffic patterns are working will help ensure your employees a smooth commute.
- 4 Be Flexible and Understanding:** With reduced schedules and limited vehicle capacities, employees using public transit may need additional time to get to work.



# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

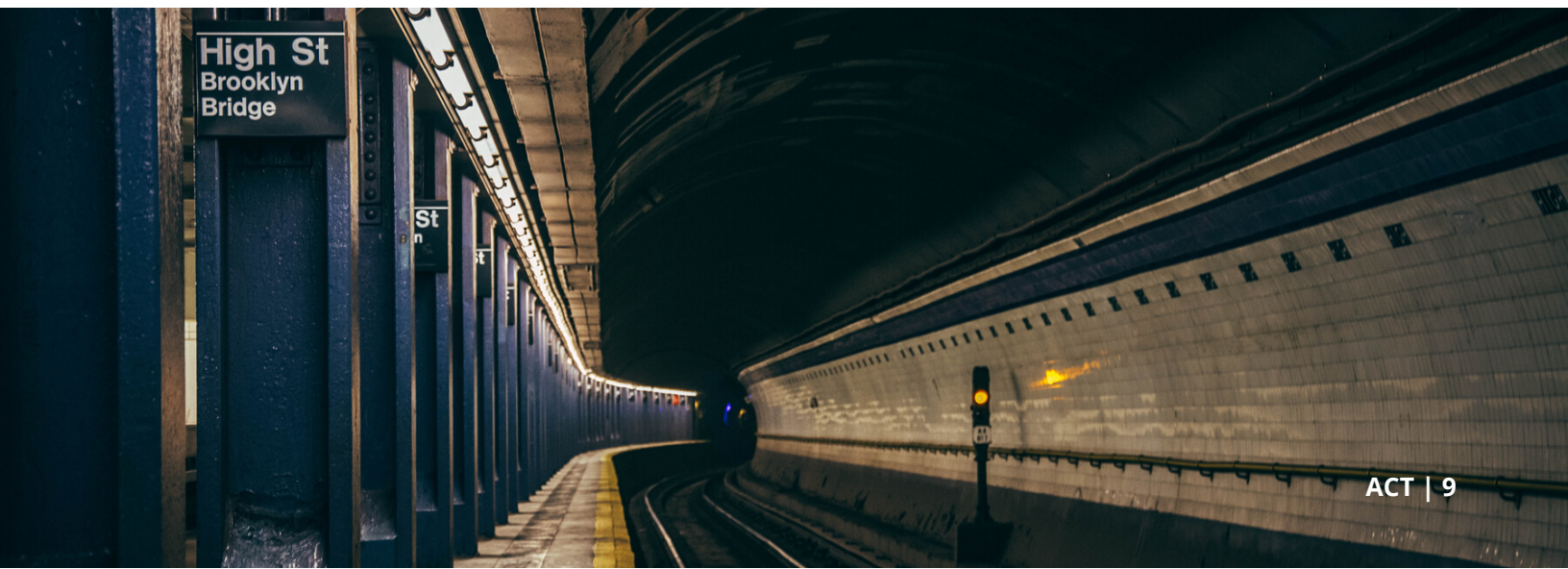
## Tips for Providers

- 1 Employers Are Partners:** Use this opportunity to devise a partnership or incentive program between your agency and the employer to boost ridership and improve commuting benefits for businesses.
- 2 Survey Employers:** To address the new realities of your service area, ask employers for information about their re-opening process to understand what their operating hours will be, how many employees will be working, will they offer staggered schedules, and what concerns they may have.
- 3 Understand Reopening Requirements:** Strategize your communication based on the phases of reopening. Will you need to block off seats? Will your agency require masks and gloves? At what stage do you expect more riders? What other safety precautions will need to be taken?
- 4 Develop Clear Marketing Campaigns:** Simple visuals can help get your point across and can help with language barriers. Infographics can be the best way to communicate with riders.



## Tips for Commuters

- 1 Familiarize Yourself With the Schedule:** Visit your transit agency's website or contact customer service to determine if there are any changes to your route or schedule.
- 2 Follow Signs and Regulations:** Vehicles may have restricted seating to ensure physical distancing. Be sure to adhere to those guidelines.
- 3 Be Flexible and Patient:** Because of the requirements for social distancing, you may not be able to ride or board a bus. Be mindful of that when making your commute.



# SHUTTLES

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Many employers providing shuttles for employees will continue or even expand these operations, as public health recommendations may limit the availability of public transportation. In addition, employers will be exploring opportunities to launch privately operated shuttles or join existing shared shuttle operations commonly provided through local transportation management associations (TMAs).

Private shuttle operations may provide a greater sense of control for employers and trust for commuters but will need to be balanced with costs associated with adhering to new capacity limits and safety protocols.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Policy & Education:** Shuttle providers should have specific changes to policy and driver education with the purpose of improving rider safety.
- 2 Physical Distancing:** Work with your shuttle provider to implement physical distancing which may be achieved by marking off or even removing seats.
- 3 Safety Transparency:** Publish cleaning protocols and schedules of vehicles.
- 4 Encourage Advanced Booking:** Offer employees shuttle services that can be booked in advance and encourage them to book trips in advance, to enable more effective use of shuttles.



# SHUTTLES

## Tips for Providers

- 1 Cleaning:** Implement best practices for cleaning, HVAC and maintaining the vehicle, by following approved cleaning guidelines.
- 2 Physical Distancing:** Board vehicles from the rear to assure physical distancing and consider marking out or removing seats to maintain onboard spacing.
- 3 Limit Interactions:** Seek ways to eliminate or minimize the need for physical payment or validation on board in favor of digital methods such as mobile payment or bookings.
- 4 Track Data:** Incorporate pre-trip health questions/screening, safe boarding guidance and post trip follow-up questions into mobile and digital booking systems.
- 5 Streamline Provided Services:** Consider demand responsive services in combination with pre-booking/reservations as a way of managing capacity to physical distancing requirements and improving service efficiency.



## Tips for Commuters

- 1 Protect Yourself and Others:** Wear protective equipment while waiting for and riding in the vehicle.
- 2 Pay Attention:** If something doesn't look clean or right, ask your driver and bring it to the attention of your supervisor or appropriate employer contact.
- 3 Plan for Delays:** Leave additional time in your commute; unexpected delays are possible during such uncertainty.
- 4 Limit Interactions:** Utilize mobile payments and bookings when possible to eliminate physical validation.



# TELEWORK/TELECOMMUTE

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As state and local governments rolled out “stay at home” or “shelter in place” advisories, many organizations had to rapidly assess internal capacity for telework implementation with only a few days’ notice. As organizations look to re-open their worksites, many plan to continue allowing employees to work from home permanently or part-time to reduce onsite numbers to support physical distancing. Now is the time to create a comprehensive, formal, telework policy.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Keep It Going:** Continuing to allow employees to work from home is the single best action to reduce the risk of exposure and continue business operations.
- 2 Invest in Technology:** Support employees continuing to work from home with the tools and equipment that enable them to succeed, including collaboration software that fosters employee interaction.
- 3 Establish Formal Policies:** Developing clear telework policies for employees and managers is essential for all organizations to ensure long-term success. Policies should clarify which employees are eligible, set expectations for communications and accountability, and outline expectations regarding access and security.
- 4 Troubleshoot:** Identify problematic areas that can cripple work productivity in a telework environment and assemble a team to assist with resolution. Establishing guidelines for a troubleshooting process should be a focus when developing telework policies for an organization.
- 5 Focus on Results:** Managers should establish clear expectations for employees and encourage team collaboration.

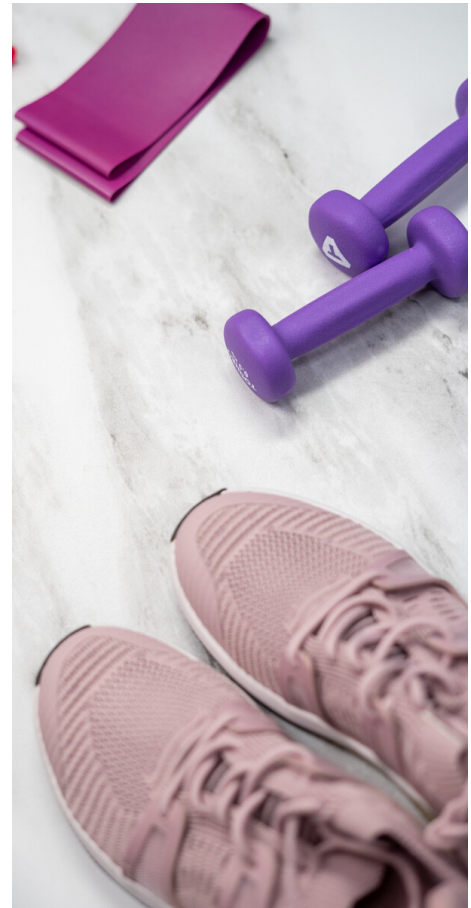


# TELEWORK/TELECOMMUTE

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## Tips for Employees

- 1 Communication:** Combat feelings of isolation by leveraging communication tools to connect with your manager and teammates. Use existing technologies to chat, email, and video conference often.
- 2 Schedules:** Establishing a consistent routine is key. Employees should maintain regular work periods. Share progress updates internally to increase productivity and complete work on time.
- 3 Stay Active:** When you travel to the workplace every day, you are likely walking from the train station or walking to lunch. Be sure to incorporate a home workout or walk around the block into your day.
- 4 Change Your Environment:** A change of environment within your home workspace can keep you energized and productive throughout the day. Move to a different desk or play music you might hear in your company lobby or in the elevator.
- 5 Plan, But Be Flexible:** If schools and businesses close and you are not alone in your house, plan to take shifts for childcare and adjust your work schedule as needed. Setting clear expectations for work and home will be important.



# VANPOOLS

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Many employers look to vanpools as a cost-effective way to keep employees from driving alone, while still allowing physical distancing. While people are reacclimating to the idea of a shared commute, vanpooling allows for a more controlled environment since it's a smaller group of people riding together. In many cases, the groups are already familiar with each other as they have commuted with each other for many years. As many get back to the workplace, there are still many people that won't, which could leave empty seats in the vanpool, creating physical distancing. As employers begin to reopen, it's important to assist vanpool groups with the transition, as it can take multiple weeks with employers deciding on reopening dates and new guidelines for staffing. It will be important for commuters to do their part to maintain the vehicle's cleanliness and adhere to recommended health guidelines to protect all riders.

## Tips for Employers

- 1 Talk to Your Employees:** Understand the level of comfort of your employees to return to their vanpool and learn what could be done to raise the level of comfort they have returning to the workplace and commuting with others.
- 2 Create A/B Scheduling for Employees:** In order to create physical distancing, consider creating two different schedules for the vanpoolers in order to split the number of people per vehicle. Keep vanpool groups on the same shift when possible.
- 3 Provide Subsidies:** With employees coming back to worksites slowly, think about providing additional seat subsidies to help offset vanpool costs.
- 4 Be Flexible with Capacity:** Allow more relaxed guidance on regulations during this time to help the vanpoolers who are partial riding due to changing work schedules.
- 5 Communicate with Your Provider:** Your vanpool program is also looking for reopening information to make sure that any needs to clean a vehicle or change a vehicle are being met as your business needs it.



# VANPOOLS

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## Tips for Providers

- 1 Provide Supplies:** Provide products or reimbursement for cleaning products, masks, gloves, etc., to help the vanpoolers keep their vans clean.
- 2 Cleaning:** Provide guidance on safe cleaning of the vanpools, like recommended products and processes.
- 3 Additional Vehicles:** Have additional vehicles ready to replace vehicles that may have been exposed to the virus or to supply duplicative service to support physical distancing requirements.

## Tips for Commuters

- 1 Protect Yourself and Others:** Wear protective equipment while in the van and around other passengers.
- 2 Keep Surfaces Clean:** Regularly clean surfaces inside the vehicle, including keys, steering wheel, center console, cup holders, gear shift, door handles and panels.
- 3 Follow Good Hygiene:** Wash hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as soon as possible after leaving the van.



CLEAN AIR  
VANPOOL

# APPENDIX

## Definitions

### ***Carpooling:***

Carpooling is an arrangement in which a small group of people, traditionally two or three, commute together by car. [1]

***Organized carpooling*** is a solution limited to users of your organization and provides mobility behaviors information through technology, incentive and details to the administrator of the program.

### ***Fringe Benefit:***

An employment benefit (such as a pension or a paid holiday) granted by an employer that has a monetary value but does not affect basic wage rates. [2]

### ***High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV):***

Federal law defines a "high occupancy vehicle" or "HOV" to mean a vehicle with no fewer than two persons. [3]

### ***Physical Distancing:***

Physical distancing, also called "social distancing," means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To physical distancing it is recommended that people stay at least 6' apart from other people, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gathers. [4]

### ***Parking Cash-out:***

"Parking cash-out program" means an employer-funded program, under which an employer offers to provide a cash allowance to an employee equivalent to the parking subsidy that the employer would otherwise pay to provide the employee with a parking space. [5]

### ***Shuttle:***

A vehicle traveling regularly over an often-short route. These are frequently provided by employers, destinations such as industrial parks, and other private agencies. [6]

### ***Teleworking/Telecommuting:***

Is the activity of working at home, while communicating with your office by phone or email, or using the internet. [7]

### ***Transportation Demand Management (TDM):***

TDM is the act of creating a most efficient multimodal transportation system that moves people with the goal of reducing congestion, improving air quality, and stimulating economic activity. [8]

### ***Vanpooling:***

An arrangement by which a large group of people, usually 7 – 15, commute to work in a dedicated van. [9]

[1] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/carpooling>

[2] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fringe%20benefits>

[3] <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freewaymgmt/hovguidance/glossary.htm>

[4] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

[5] <http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/Parking%20Cash%20Out%20Report.pdf>

[6] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shuttle>

[7] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/teleworking>

[8] <https://www.actweb.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=3473>

[9] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vanpooling>

# APPENDIX

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## **Additional Resources:**

**ACT: Information and Resources to Promote Safe Commuting During COVID-19. Updated May 21, 2020.** <https://www.actweb.org/covid-19>

**CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again. May 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/CDC-Activities-Initiatives-for-COVID-19-Response.pdf>

**CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). May 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

**CDC: Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes. Updated May 7, 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

**CDC: What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19. Updated April 14, 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/bus-transit-operator.html>

**CDC: What Rail Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19. Updated April 14, 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rail-transit-operator.html>

**CDC: What Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and Other Passenger Drivers-for-Hire Need to Know About COVID-19. Updated April 17, 2020.** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html>

**EPA: List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2, Updated May 20, 2020.** <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

**OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19,** <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

**Telework.gov Home Page,** <https://www.telework.gov/about/>

**WHO: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Advice for the Public. Updated April 29, 2020.** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>



For more information:



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