

A photograph showing a woman in a blue shirt and glasses waving to a man with a white beard and sunglasses sitting in the driver's seat of a white car. In the background, another man in a suit is walking. The scene is outdoors in a parking lot.

When to deploy a shuttle or promote vanpools

This document explores how shuttles and vanpools are different, and when a public entity like a city, county, or transit agency should consider one solution or the other.



Shuttles

Transit Agency Model delivered or contracted services



Vanpools

Vendor Model

What

- Shuttles connect points throughout the day, either on a scheduled fixed route, deviated fixed route, or demand response.
- Shuttles often fill gaps in larger high-capacity transit systems helping connect transit riders to nearby destinations, such as large employers or business districts.
- Shuttles typically cover a shorter distance than vanpools.
- Vanpools are composed of people that live near each other, work near each other, and have the same schedule. They may pick up at a central location such as a park and ride, come to people's homes, or have multiple stops.
- Ideal distance is 15 miles or more each way, and increases in cost effectiveness as distances grow further. Ideal size is at least 4 and up to 15 people per van.
- It is considered "flexible fixed" route transportation with a set schedule.

When

- Shuttles are well suited when the **demand is constant** throughout the day, or in a predictable cycle.
- Shuttles can help address first/last mile connection gaps.
- Vanpools are well suited to bring employees to work for **scheduled shifts**, including standard, swing and graveyard shifts.
- First and last mile gaps are largely eliminated as the purpose of a vanpool is a complete commute.



Shuttles



Vanpools

How

- Shuttles require a paid, professional driver.
- Shuttle vehicles are owned or leased by the transit agency, other operating entity, or contracted service provider.
- Vanpool drivers are volunteers from among the vanpool members.
- Vanpool vehicles are rented/leased or otherwise directly provided to the vanpool participants.

Cost & Price

Cost refers to cost to operate.

Price refers to cost to end user or passenger.

- Shuttle costs are paid for by the transit agency, city, county, or business.
- Prices for users vary based on the shuttle scenario and may be free to the user.
- The cost of a vanpool is paid by the users of the vanpool, employers, or a combination of both.
- The price to vanpool members varies depending on commute distance, type of vehicle, and the number of participants. This price can include but is not limited to rental/lease of vehicle, maintenance, insurance, gas, customer service, and an emergency ride home program.
- A public¹ vanpool can be subsidized with federal funds up to 50% of total cost to reduce the price paid by the users.
- The subsidy is public dollars that reduce the price for users (vanpool contractor/purchased transportation model) or cost of to the transit agency (directly operated model).

Funding Sources

- Transit Agencies can use state or federal funds to pay for a shuttle.
- A private business may contribute to the cost of operating a shuttle.
- Fare box revenue may or may not be collected to offset costs.
- FTA 5307, 5311 for Operations, 5310 for Program Management, 5339 for Capital.
- Federal funds such as;
 - ◆ FTA - 5307, 5311, 5339
 - ◆ FHWA - CMAQ, NHPP, STBG
- Local funds such as;
 - ◆ Oregon Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF)
 - ◆ Economic Development or other available, local sources that vary by state, region and locality.

Revenue Generation

- Reporting Vehicle Revenue Miles to National Transit Database results in increased local allocation of 5307 and 5339 which is used to help cover the costs of shuttle capital costs, operations, and marketing.
- Reporting Vehicle Revenue Miles to National Transit Database results in increased local allocation of 5307, 5339, and 5311 which can be used to provide the subsidy regardless of who is operating the program—directly operated or purchased transportation—in the future.

¹ Public Vanpools are open to anyone and serve more than one employer