



## **Wanted: Columbus-to-Indy commuters looking to save money**

*Program offers help for workers traveling to, from or within ten Central Indiana counties*

COLUMBUS (July 3, 2012) – Residents interested in sharing their commute to Indianapolis and other area employment centers are invited to a public meeting at 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 19 at City Hall.

Anyone who commutes within, into, or out of the following counties is eligible: Boone, Delaware, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Marion, Morgan, or Shelby.

“Vanpools are a great option for people who want to save money, reduce their carbon footprint, and use their commuting time to read or do things other than drive,” says Lori Kaplan, business development and vanpool manager for Commuter Connect.

Residents who vanpool stand to save thousands of dollars in transportation costs each year. The fuel costs alone for an 80-mile daily round trip commute are more than \$230 per month with fuel at the current average price of \$3.50/gallon.

“When the hidden costs – such as routine maintenance, insurance and vehicle depreciation – are factored in, the real costs can exceed \$1,000 a month,” Kaplan says. “By contrast, the cost for vanpoolers with an 80-mile daily commute averages \$120 per month.”

According to federal law, employers can provide a transit benefit of up to \$125 a month to defray costs of public transit, which include public bus service and vanpooling. For employees who do not receive such a benefit, Commuter Connect is able to provide a monthly subsidy of \$50 per passenger for vanpooling. Vanpool participants with an 80-mile daily commute who take advantage of the Commuter Connect subsidy can reduce their annual commute costs by more than \$11,000.

Laurence Brown, director of CAMPO, the Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, said, “Our work involves transportation planning and mobility for the Columbus region, and the Commuter Connect program is one more tool in our toolbox to help people get around. Personally, I have firsthand experience with vanpools. Before this position, I commuted by vanpool every day to Indianapolis for two years, and I know I saved thousands of dollars in gas and by not having to replace my aging vehicle. Plus, I used that time to read, write, email and sleep. I loved it.”

Commuter Connect, a service of CIRT A, the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority, helps connect commuters with various commuting alternatives – carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus, biking and walking. It is a federally funded service, through a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding (CMAQ) grant, designed to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

Commuter Connect has helped 142 Central Indiana residents participate in 12 vanpools to get to and from work. One of those vanpools includes 15 Johnson and Marion County residents who commute to work at Cummins in Columbus.

WHAT: Public meeting to discuss starting commuter vanpools  
WHEN: 7 p.m., July 19, 2012  
WHERE: Columbus City Hall  
WHO: Commuter Connect, a service of CIRT A (Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority)  
INFO: [www.CommuterConnect.us](http://www.CommuterConnect.us) or 317-327-RIDE (7433)

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MEDIA CONTACT: Jen Schmits Thomas, JTPR, 317-441-2487, [jen@jtprinc.com](mailto:jen@jtprinc.com)