



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **New Bloomington-to-Indy vanpool starts Feb. 1**

Six weeks after attending an informational meeting in Bloomington, David Hughes is ready to drive to work in downtown Indy in a Commuter Connect-provided van and carry ten passengers in addition to himself. His employer, Eli Lilly and Company, is even providing a preferential parking spot near his building entrance for the van.

Hughes, who commuted by vanpool in California before moving to Indiana, is the volunteer driver of the new vanpool. Commuter Connect helped him find passengers whose work schedules and home and work locations are compatible with his.

Nine of the vanpool participants will meet at a public parking lot in Bloomington. The van will pick up a couple of passengers in Martinsville en route to Indianapolis. Of the 11 passengers, four work at Eli Lilly and Company, two at IUPUI, and one each at Wishard Hospital, the State of Indiana, and the law firms of Wooden & McLaughlin and Barnes and Thornburg.

A service of the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA), Commuter Connect provides free “matchmaking” services connecting people who could share rides, in an effort to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

This brings to three the number of vanpools traveling between Bloomington and Indianapolis every day. More than 33 people will be riding in three vans with the Commuter Connect logo.

“The result is removing 30 vehicles from State Road 37 every day,” said Lori Kaplan, business development and vanpool manager for Commuter Connect. “That’s not only good for the people in the vans who are saving money and reducing stress, it also reduces the amount of traffic for others using the road.”

With approximately 3,300 Bloomington residents working in Marion County, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, Kaplan says the potential impact of the program is considerable.

“While all three Bloomington vanpools are full, we are collecting the names of interested commuters immediately for waiting lists for each van and to begin organizing the fourth vanpool from Bloomington to Indianapolis. Anyone interested in getting into a vanpool should contact Commuter Connect at [cs@cirta.us](mailto:cs@cirta.us). We can also help folks find carpool matches if their

schedules, home locations and/or work locations aren't compatible with the folks in a vanpool," said Kaplan.

While carpoolers share rides in one of their fellow commuters' vehicles, the vanpool service available through Commuter Connect actually supplies a van to groups of five to 15 commuters. Residents who take advantage of this service stand to save thousands of dollars in transportation costs each year.

The fuel cost alone for the 110-mile daily round trip commute is more than \$400 per month with fuel at the current average price of \$3.50 a gallon. When the hidden costs – such as routine maintenance, insurance and vehicle depreciation – are factored in, the real cost of commuting 110 miles round trip daily can exceed \$1,300 a month, and \$16,500 a year. That's more than half the value of many new cars.

By contrast, the average cost for the Bloomington folks who commute to Indy in one of the existing vanpools is \$110 per month.

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