

This FAQs document is specific for vanpools that lease their vehicles from vanpool leasing Providers (Provider) expressly approved by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and apply directly to RCTC for an ongoing vanpool subsidy, known as VanClub. To apply for a VanClub subsidy, the individual who signs the lease with the Provider applies directly to [VanClub.net](https://www.vanclub.net). RCTC also provides subsidies through the California Vanpool Authority (CalVans). To be eligible for a VanClub subsidy through CalVans, visit the CalVans [website](#) for additional information and to apply.

## CONSIDERING VANPOOLING? READ ON.

### A. What is vanpooling and is vanpooling the right choice for me?

Do you commute a long distance to work? Are your work days and work hours relatively consistent – or have the potential to be? If so, you may be an ideal candidate for vanpooling. A vanpool is a group of five (5) to 15 commuters who travel together on a regular basis in a van, to and from work. One person usually drives and/or maintains the van while passengers pay a monthly fare. Vanpools that qualify for the VanClub subsidy are leased from a RCTC-approved Provider and the individual who signs the lease with their Provider is either their employer or a participant/passenger in the vanpool. Throughout this FAQ, this person is referred to as the “Leaseholder”, or “Coordinator”.

### B. What are the benefits of vanpooling?

Vanpooling saves you money on fuel and commuting costs. If your vanpool qualifies for the VanClub Vanpool Subsidy Program, your van will receive an ongoing subsidy of up to \$600 per month. By vanpooling you will also be able to reduce wear and tear on your car, save time by traveling in carpool lanes and reduce traffic and air pollution. Vanpool participants may also qualify for special perks at work, such as preferred parking, prize drawings, subsidies and more (perks/benefits will vary by Employer). Studies have shown that vanpool participants lower their commuting stress and vanpooling is an excellent way to meet new friends!

### C. How much does it cost to vanpool?

The cost will vary depending on the size of the van, van features, commute distance, number of passengers, additional employer subsidies, etc. Many times, the vanpool group allows the vanpool’s Primary Driver to commute for free or at a reduced fare. After this is determined, then the balance of the lease and expenses is most often distributed equally among the vanpool passengers. The monthly lease through your selected RCTC-approved Provider, will cover the van lease, insurance, maintenance and towing costs. It is the responsibility of the vanpool group to pay for the balance of the lease (minus the VanClub subsidy amount) directly to the Provider. It is recommended that you speak with your Provider to see if they also accept TransitChek and the Federal Mass Transportation Benefits Program (MTBP) vouchers.

### D. Will a vanpool pick me up at home?

To reduce the number of pick-ups and drop-offs, ensuring that everyone arrives to work and home quickly, many vanpoolers choose to meet at Park & Ride lots (for a listing and a map, please visit the IE Commuter website at <https://www.IECommuter.org>), or, other agreed-upon locations along the way. A typical vanpool may make anywhere from one to three stops to and/or from their work site. The vanpool group will agree upon all pick up and drop off locations along the vanpool route.

## E. What if I'm late or another passenger keeps us waiting?

To ensure an efficient and compatible vanpool, the Coordinator, Primary Driver and passengers should cooperate to define the pickup schedule and waiting policies best suited to their vanpool route. It is up to each vanpool group to determine and set a standard waiting period; five to seven minutes is common for the van to wait for all its passengers to arrive.

## F. What if I'm sick or go on vacation - do I still have to pay for my seat?

Your monthly fare reserves your seat whether you use it or not. If you intend to be gone for an extended period, most vanpool groups allow you to temporarily "sublet" your seat to another passenger. Remember, even if you miss a day here or there, vanpooling is still a bargain compared to driving alone.

## G. If I become sick at work, how do I get home?

Talk with your employer to see if they offer a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in the event of a personal emergency or any other unforeseen event should a rideshare/vanpool participant need an emergency ride home from work. RCTC provides a GRH Program for participating employers in Riverside County, offered through RCTC's rideshare program, [IE Commuter](#). Contact IE Commuter at 866-RIDESHARE (866.743.3742) and a representative will assist you and let you know if your employer is enrolled in IE Commuter's GRH program.

## H. Are there vanpool group rules/guidelines?

It is up to each individual vanpool group to establish rules/guidelines that cover such things as playing the radio (what the group listens to), tardiness, vanpool etiquette, internal conflicts, vehicle cleaning, hygiene protocols, etc. The vanpool's Coordinator may set some policies for their vanpool group, while other rules may be voted upon by all passengers. Serious conflicts that cannot be resolved within the vanpool group may be brought to the attention of your Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) or your vehicle's Provider.

## I. I'm trying to start a vanpool and don't have enough passengers. What should I do?

First, review the minimum occupancy requirements (refer to the VanClub Guidelines at [VanClub.net](#)). If your vanpool does not meet the minimum occupancy requirements, [contact](#) VanClub and the RCTC-approved Providers to see if they are aware of any "Waitlist" commuters that would be a good fit for your vanpool. You may also use the search/map function on the homepage of [VanClub.net](#) to search active and forming vanpools to see if any of those meet your commuting needs. IE Commuter staff may also assist with finding other interested commuters, by calling 1-866-RIDESHARE (866.743.3742). If based on the size of your vehicle and the number of commuters, you still do not meet the minimum occupancy requirements, consider a smaller van size and/or speak with your Human Resources/Relations department or Employer Transportation Coordinator (ETC) who may know of potential vanpool passengers.

## J. What if I already have a vanpool that is leased through a RCTC-approved Provider - can I participate in the VanClub Subsidy Program?

Yes, you can participate in the Program; however, you must still qualify and apply to the Program. Follow the process identified in the VanClub Guidelines and as summarized in the Application and Reporting Requirements Section below. Should you have a lease with a leasing company other than one approved by RCTC, VanClub will NOT accept that lease agreement and you will NOT qualify for a VanClub subsidy. Also remember that you are only required to enter into a month-to-month lease with your Provider; however, a

longer-term lease period is permitted which may reduce your lease costs (a lease term beyond month to month is at your discretion and not a Program requirement). If you have any questions, contact us at 844-VANCLUB (844.826.2582) or email us at [info@vanclub.net](mailto:info@vanclub.net).

### K. Do I need to own a van to apply to the VanClub Vanpool Subsidy Program?

No. In fact, vehicles must be leased by either a commuter or a commuter's Employer through an RCTC-approved Provider. The Provider will provide commuter vehicles on a month-to-month lease basis. The monthly lease also includes insurance, maintenance and towing. The Provider also offers information and assistance for recruiting passengers and setting fares and policies. If you own your own vehicle and decide to start a vanpool, or, if you participate in a vanpool owned by your employer, you will not qualify for a VanClub subsidy.

### L. Why can't I use the existing vehicle through a lease that I have with my car rental company?

Federal requirements govern RCTC's VanClub subsidy program. RCTC was required to conduct a formal procurement process to contract with Provider(s) to provide leased vehicles to Program participants. The procurement was conducted, was publicly advertised, and the Providers who applied were required to follow many federal and RCTC-specific requirements. A lease through any other leasing company (other than Providers approved by RCTC) is not permitted for participation in VanClub. Visit [VanClub.net](http://VanClub.net) for information on the RCTC-approved Providers.

### M. If VanClub approves my subsidy application, am I or my vanpool passengers eligible for any other vanpool subsidies or incentives, either through another public agency or my employer?

Once VanClub approves a vanpools' participation in the Vanpool Subsidy Program, the participants in the vanpool (including the Coordinator, the Primary Driver and all passengers) are no longer eligible to receive subsidies from a neighboring Vanpool Subsidy Program, such as Los Angeles Metro, Orange County Transportation Authority, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, San Diego Association of Governments or the Victor Valley Transit Authority. Accepting vanpool subsidies from any of the above-mentioned programs while receiving a VanClub subsidy simultaneously will immediately disqualify the vanpool and its passengers from receiving a VanClub subsidy.

The types of incentives or subsidies that are permitted while receiving a VanClub subsidy, are employer subsidies that may be provided directly by the employer to vanpool passengers. These types of subsidies may include the Federal Mass Transportation Benefits Program (MTBP) subsidy. However, if an employer subsidy is funded by the types of incentives identified in the prior paragraph above, then those types of subsidies/ incentives are not permitted if you are enrolled in VanClub.

In addition, [IE Commuter](#) also offers commuter incentive programs for Riverside County and/or San Bernardino County residents that have been ridesharing for three or more months. Qualified vanpool Coordinator and passengers may be permitted to apply and participate in these reward programs. For more information, call IE Commuter at 1-866-RIDESHARE (866.743.3742).

### N. Are there other employer-provided benefits for vanpooling?

As an added bonus, both employers and employees can benefit by participating in "Commuter Benefits", a program outlined in the federal tax code that offers employers tax breaks for subsidizing vanpools for employees. In addition, employees may benefit when they set aside pre-tax dollars for vanpool commuting

expenses. For more information, talk to your employer's Human Resources or your ETC, or speak with your Accountant/Tax Advisor, or go to the Internal Revenue Service [website](#) and search for 'Commuter Benefits' to review the most recent updates to the program.

## O. If I start a Vanpool, do I have to be the Primary Driver?

No, you do not have to be the Primary Driver. Vanpool duties may include helping your vanpool get on the road by recruiting a Primary Driver or alternate driver(s), helping to find passengers, and researching leasing requirements. If you are not the vanpool's Coordinator, once the vanpool is operating, you can simply pay your fare and be a passenger. Or you may offer to be a Reporter and assist the Coordinator with the VanClub monthly reporting/logging responsibilities. Remember, if you are the Coordinator and not the Primary Driver, in addition to complying with your Provider's Primary Driver requirements, your vanpool's Primary Driver must also submit a Participation Agreement (found at [VanClub.net](#)) so that you complete the VanClub application.

## P. I want to join a vanpool, but I have been told I must qualify as a driver to join. I just want to be a passenger. Do I have to qualify as a driver?

No, you do not have to qualify as a driver. One of the advantages to joining a vanpool is that you can simply be a passenger and enjoy a relaxed ride. In order for the vanpool to continue to receive an ongoing subsidy from RCTC, the Vanpool's Coordinator cannot discriminate against you if you are either unwilling or unable to drive. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact VanClub at 844-VANCLUB (844.826.2582) or at [info@vanclub.net](mailto:info@vanclub.net).

## Q. What are the advantages of being my Vanpool's Primary Driver?

Since every vanpool sets its own rules, the benefits of driving will vary based on how you choose to organize your vanpool. In exchange for driving and scheduling vehicle maintenance appointments, Primary Drivers often ride at a discount or for free and may also have limited use of the van on evenings and weekends (please refer to the Program Participation Agreement, as non-commute, nights/weekend use of the leased van shall not exceed 20% of total monthly mileage and is subject to conditions contained in your Coordinator's lease with your Provider). Other vanpools split the driving duties between several people, giving each of them a discount. Or your vanpool may prefer to run more mutually, with everyone taking a turn at driving, collecting fares, handling maintenance responsibilities, etc.

## R. Is the VanClub subsidy available to persons with disabilities?

Yes – your Provider has accessible vehicles available for vanpool groups that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Particularly, if there is a vacancy in a vanpool and a person with a disability applies for a seat, the vanpool and the Provider must make accommodations for the individual to become a vanpool member. RCTC contractually requires the approved Providers to comply with this ADA requirement.

## VANCLUB APPLICATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

### A. I'm interested in starting a vanpool and taking advantage of the ongoing VanClub Subsidy – what do I need to do?

There are a few steps you must take to qualify and be accepted into VanClub. VanClub only accepts applications online at [VanClub.net](#). If you do not have access to a computer, smart phone or tablet, or access to the internet, contact VanClub for assistance at [info@vanclub.net](mailto:info@vanclub.net), or call us at 844-VANCLUB (844.826.2582).

An Application Guide is also available on VanClub.net at this [link](#).

ALL of the following criteria must be met to qualify (some of these criteria are explained further below):

1. Only the individual who holds the van lease (aka Coordinator) may apply to VanClub to participate in the program. VanClub will not accept applications from other vanpool passengers or the Primary Driver, if they are NOT the Coordinator;
2. The vanpool must be used for commuting purposes to and from work or a vocational/post-secondary education destination (AKA “worksite”);
3. The vanpool driver must be a volunteer and a commuter in the program;
4. You must lease your van through a RCTC-approved Provider;
5. Minimum passenger roster occupancy at van start up must be at 70% or higher;
6. Your round-trip travel to and from work must be at least 30 miles; and
7. Your commute must either begin or end within the RCTC service area: (within Riverside County).

Log onto [VanClub.net](#) and select the “Apply Today” button to begin the VanClub qualification process. The Qualification Form asks you a few simple questions to determine if you qualify for the Program. If you meet the minimum qualification requirements identified above, then you will be prompted to create a VanClub account and receive additional emails from [VanClub.net](#) to provide instructions on the steps to complete the online application. If you do not qualify, the online system will inform you as to why, and you may try again (if you input an error for example). If you did not input in error and or you believe you do qualify, please [contact](#) VanClub to discuss the qualification form inputs and/or any questions you may have.

1. **Provider Notification:** When you submit your application, VanClub will notify your Provider of your application, who will submit specific information about the leased vehicle, and provide a copy of the lease. Details on your leased vehicle will be incorporated into the VanClub reporting process, and you will be able to view this information. Should you have questions about this information, please [contact](#) VanClub.
2. **Approval and Next Steps:** During the application review process, VanClub may contact or seek clarification from your Provider, your employer and/or your passengers. Upon approval, VanClub will notify you and provide your subsidy start date and the exact amount of your subsidy. Should your subsidy start mid-month, VanClub will prorate the subsidy; otherwise the subsidy may start on the 1st of the following month. VanClub will also provide you (and your Alternate Reporter if one is identified) with information and procedures for monthly reporting. For steps on monthly reporting, go to [VanClub.net](#) and download the document “Monthly Reporting Guide”.

## B. Once enrolled, when does the VanClub subsidy begin?

Completed applications (including all items identified in above) must be received and approved by VanClub to be considered for a subsidy. VanClub will coordinate with your Provider and the vanpool’s Coordinator as to when the VanClub vanpool will start operations and will do our best to start the subsidy shortly after you start your vanpool. If the subsidy begins during the month, VanClub will prorate the subsidy based on your anticipated commute days during the month. However, there are times that the subsidy may not begin until the 1st of the following month after approval. Should the online application not be submitted or is not complete, approval may be delayed – make sure everything is complete and accurate upon submittal. Upon

approval, the VanClub subsidy will appear as a credit on the month's vanpool lease statement from your Provider.

### C. What are the reporting/logging responsibilities?

The Coordinator (and/or designated Alternate Reporter) is responsible to document all required information to be submitted into VanClub's reporting system through [VanClub.net](https://VanClub.net). Logging is simple and primarily involves keeping track of who commutes to and from work each day during a calendar month period, and any other major variances to your commute (in miles or travel time). The VanClub.net website and system are mobile optimized; therefore, you may easily track and document your daily commute on your smart phone or tablet. If you do not have a smart phone or tablet, or prefer to write down your commute statistics, VanClub has created an Intake Form or "Cheat Sheet", that you can print out and keep inside the van to track your daily commute information. This "Cheat Sheet" can be found on [VanClub.net](https://VanClub.net). The information you gather each day by either inputting directly into [VanClub.net](https://VanClub.net) via your smart phone or tablet, or writing on a "Cheat Sheet", allows you to log your trip statistics onto the System at your convenience, either daily, weekly, or at the end of the month.

As you track your daily commute statistics, also keep an accounting of the vanpool's out-of-pocket costs and vehicle expenses for the month (fuel, fluids/oil, car washes and so on). If your employer reimburses you for some or all of these expenses, you must also keep track and include those on the "Cheat Sheet" or you can input those directly via your smart phone or tablet into [VanClub.net](https://VanClub.net), as the costs are incurred. It is important that the commute statistics and costs are tracked accurately, and a complete report is inputted and submitted by no later than the 7th of the month following the reporting period. For a detailed document outlining the reporting steps and process, go to [VanClub.net](https://VanClub.net) and download the "Monthly Reporting Guide" document.