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For immediate release

Contact: Sheila Storm or Ruth Reiman at (520) 792-1093

Pima Association of Governments to expand vanpool program to all regional commuters

Looking for a way to minimize the stress you feel when driving to work? Want to save gas money? How about meeting new friends?

Starting this month, all area residents who work in Pima County will be able to start a vanpool or join an existing vanpool as part of Pima Association of Governments' newly expanded regional vanpool program. Only five people are needed to start a vanpool, but larger groups with as many as 15 people can be accommodated.

Vanpooling is a great option for suburban commuters who travel longer distances to commercial centers in the county, such as downtown. It is a cost effective way to commute, since the monthly fare is divided up among all the passengers. The fare is determined by the size and style of vehicle, the number of passengers, and the miles driven each month. Many companies offer subsidies for vanpoolers to reduce the monthly cost. Participants also may pay their fare with pre-tax dollars, which provides even more savings.

An internationally recognized provider, VPSI, will offer eight different types of vans for commuters to choose from in the PAG region. For example, the mini-van seats up to seven passengers, a 12-passenger van has captain seats, and the 15-passenger extended van has split bench seating and an exterior step for easy entry. VPSI has a network of auto care centers conveniently located throughout the county to service the vanpool fleet. VPSI also provides support services for the 300 vans operating in the Phoenix area.

PAG's vanpool program expansion is a key strategy of its regional Travel Demand Management program. The TDM program focuses on reducing

Pima Association of Governments

177 N. Church Ave, Suite 405
Tucson, AZ 85701

(520) 792-1093 [tel]
(520) 792-9151 [fax]
www.pagnet.org [web]

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vehicle use in the most congested places and during the most congested times. The previous vanpool program had been limited to employees of larger companies within the region. Now all commuters can participate, regardless of their employer's size.

"I have found the vanpool to be a significant quality improvement in my workday routine," said Peter Ziegler, MD, Family Medicine clinical director at the Sells Service Unit. "As one who commutes 75 miles one way to my workplace, the vanpool offers me not only a significant cost savings but also allows me to use the commute time as needed for reading, completing work on my computer, or relaxing along a scenic ride. As the Clinical Director at the Sells Service Unit, I have seen how the vanpool provides a significant advantage in the recruitment of employees to a remote site where commute distance has historically been a barrier. I thank you for this invaluable resource that saves time, money, and natural resources."

To help recruit drivers and provide them with some compensation for their added responsibilities, the program also will allow driver discounts or exemptions from the monthly fare. Another new feature will qualify all vanpoolers for the Guaranteed Ride Home program without having to apply.

PAG also will implement a variable subsidy system this year. By 2009, the maximum PAG subsidy will be \$300/month per van, adjusted based on any company subsidies and the number of passengers. This will allow PAG to expand the program, add new pools to the fleet, and continue to provide all vanpoolers a monthly incentive.

Please contact PAG Rideshare 884-RIDE (7433) for more information about starting a vanpool or visit the Web site at www.PAGnet.org for updates and more information about Travel Demand Management.

Pima Association of Governments is an association of local, state and tribal governments with a mission to build consensus among its members and the public on regional planning for transportation, air quality and water quality. PAG's staff gather and analyze data, provide accurate information, and coordinate an open and cooperative planning process to promote good decision-making for the region. Please visit www.PAGnet.org for more information.