

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSIT INSURANCE POOL
VANPOOL BEST PRACTICES

Introduction

The development and maintenance of an efficient and effective loss control effort is essential to the viability of each WSTIP member's Vanpool operation as defined by RCW 46.74. The intent of the standards presented below is to provide a basic set of key loss control elements, which when fully implemented by WSTIP members, will help to ensure that liability loss exposures are adequately addressed.

Standards

1. Each member shall follow guidelines set forth in the WSTIP VANPOOL BEST PRACTICES, which outlines the agency's policies and procedures relative to Vanpool loss control efforts. The plan shall be updated annually and include the following elements:
 - A. Vanpool driver selection, retention, orientation, and refresher course policies and procedures.
 - i) Selection process shall include:
 - a) Written, signed driver application form.
 - b) MVR report review (minimum: three-year personal).
 - c) Informal interview of primary driver.
 - d) Employment/student or volunteer status is on file.
 - e) Verification of valid driver's license (and obtain copy).
 - f) Signed Vanpool Agreement.
 - g) Signed release of information for MVR and other pertinent documents.
 - h) Use of a driver function list - See Appendix I
 - ii) Driver selection and retention criteria shall include:
 - a) Current, unrestricted license (prescription lens requirement is acceptable). Review other restrictions on an individual basis for applicability to safety.
 - b) Five years of licensed driving experience.
 - c) Reject with suspension/revocation within three years.
 - d) Reject with suspension/revocation within seven years for reckless driving, hit & run, leaving accident scene, failure to appear, DUI, or vehicle-related felony.
 - e) Reject with unacceptable record of moving violations and/or accidents (as defined in Appendix II).
 - f) Reject if accident or moving violation history has resulted in insurance cancellation or non-renewal in the last three years.
 - iii) Driver orientation process shall include:
 - a) Written manual.
 - b) Orientation and on-road evaluation required to be completed before driving is permitted.

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- c) Defensive driving course required to be completed prior to driving of first trip as a Vanpool driver. The defensive driving course must incorporate the use of professionally produced audiovisual materials and incorporate proven and/or recognized concepts such as those offered by the National Safety Council, FLI Learning Systems, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as it relates to 15-passenger vans, or others. Recommended topics are presented in Appendix IV. The individual selected to present such materials must be accredited or otherwise qualified by education and work experience.
 - d) In an emergency, a rider may request temporary authorization to drive, from the Transit Agency Vanpool staff. After Vanpool staff review, if authorized, a rider may drive for a one day trip. No one may drive without authorization. This emergency authorization must be followed up with attendance at one of the next two scheduled mandatory driver orientations.
- iv) The driver's refresher course shall include:
- a) At least two hours of Vanpool driver's refresher course shall be provided every three years.
 - b) The refresher shall include a basic review of defensive driving techniques and review of the overall Vanpool accident experience within WSTIP.
- B. Record keeping and administrative activities shall include:
- i) A file shall be organized and maintained for each Vanpool group.
 - ii) The file shall contain copies of the application form, driver agreement, driver's license, MVR, interview documentation, release of information statement, driver function list, employment verification, evidence of personal auto insurance (where personal use is allowed), and orientation records. Also, files shall contain copies of written records of complaints, commendations, and accident reports, as well as rider agreements.
 - iii) A process shall be set up to flag license and insurance certificate expirations (if required), as well as annual MVR report re-order dates and driver refresher course due dates.
- C. Maintenance policies and procedures shall include:
- i) Establishment of a mileage-based preventive maintenance system, which meets or exceeds the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations.

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- ii) Requirement that the services of ASE Certified (or equivalent) mechanics (or service personnel who work under the direction of such qualified mechanics) are used for maintenance purposes.
 - iii) Requirements that mechanics report vehicle damage or unusual patterns of wear - which may indicate abuse or poor operating techniques.
 - iv) Monthly reviews of the maintenance status to determine if any Vanpools have exceeded established mileage intervals with follow-ups as needed.
- D. Accident/Incident reporting and investigation process shall include:
- i) Vanpool drivers shall be required to report damage in connection with use of the van to a designated individual at the transit agency within 24 hours. Vanpool drivers are required to report any injury accidents immediately. After hours, weekends, and holidays contact information shall be provided to Vanpool drivers to facilitate reporting during non-business hours.
 - ii) An immediate investigation shall be conducted on any accident involving a fatality, serious injury, or severe property damage consistent with requirements contained in the WSTIP Loss Control Manual. All other accidents shall be investigated in a timely manner consistent with WSTIP requirements.
 - iii) A Vanpool driver involved in a serious accident shall not be allowed to operate a van following such accident until cleared by a qualified agency staff member.
- E. Personal Use:
- i) If allowed, personal use of the van shall be limited to use covered in Appendix III.
 - ii) Only pre-approved drivers, designated in writing by the WSTIP-member transit agency, shall be allowed to operate the van. Prior to operating the van, such individuals must complete the orientation, on-road evaluation, and defensive driving course.
- F. Disciplinary Procedures:
- i) In cases in which a driver is the subject of repeated (validated, safety-related) complaints by Vanpool passengers, agency staff, and/or members of the public, the driver's eligibility shall be terminated based

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upon the severity of the complaint(s), their number, and timing.

- ii) The driving privileges of any Vanpool driver who fails to meet the retention criteria (see Appendix II) shall be terminated.
2. Rider agreements: Each WSTIP member offering Vanpool services shall require riders to sign and date a "rider agreement" setting terms on which such service is offered. These rider agreements shall contain a provision that requires seat belts to be worn by each rider. Also, rider agreements shall clearly explain who qualifies as an "authorized" driver. Rider agreements shall be kept on file.
 3. It is recommended each WSTIP member ensure that an adequate level of administrative staffing is provided such that compliance with these standards can be achieved and sustained.
 4. It is recommended each WSTIP member establish position descriptions that outline the educational and training needs for the Vanpool staff, along with the principal job responsibilities.
 5. For each Vanpool staff position, it is recommended that adequate funds be budgeted to enable the staff to attend professional development workshops and conferences to maintain and extend their knowledge of safe operating practices to ensure continued success of the program.

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APPENDIX I

Volunteer Vanpool Driver Function List

As a Volunteer Vanpool Driver you must be able to:

- Understand and adhere to Washington State traffic laws.
- Understand and adhere to transit agency Vanpool policies and procedures.
- Understand and apply the principles of defensive driving.
- Safely operate a 15' to 19' van
 - carrying up to 15 passengers;
 - in potentially heavy traffic;
 - over a variety of roadways, including narrow city streets;
 - on a planned route; and
 - while adhering to an established time schedule.
- Meet the requirements of the state law, which requires that seatbelts be worn at all times by you and your passengers.
- Enter and exit van's driver seat, sit upright in seat, bend, reach, kneel, stretch, and turn as appropriate to inspect all items on the van that you are going to operate.
- Bend, reach, stretch, and turn as appropriate to manipulate all vehicle controls while safely operating the vehicle.
- Read vehicle instrument panel/gauges, traffic signs, and look for pedestrians and other obstructions while driving during the day and night.
- Assess rapidly changing traffic situations, evaluate hazardous conditions, and take prompt effective action to deal with them safely.
- Provide for the well-being of yourself and passengers in emergencies and special situations.
- Communicate with the public, Vanpool participants, transit agency representatives, and if necessary, with public safety officers.
- Ensure that written and verbal reports are completed accurately and on-time.
- Ensure that daily pre-trip inspections, weekly, and monthly vehicle maintenance inspections are performed in accordance with established checklists and vehicle receives servicing at established intervals.
- Ensure that vehicle interior and exterior are cleaned at established intervals.
- Ensure that vehicle is safely fueled at self-service pumps and check tire pressure and wear every fueling.

APPENDIX II

Vanpool Driver Eligibility/Retention Criteria

Drivers with the following items on their records will not be eligible to participate as a vanpool driver: suspension/revocation within seven years for reckless driving, hit and run, leaving accident scene, failure to appear, DUI, negligent, or vehicle-related felony.

Within a three (3)-year period, prospective eligible drivers shall have no more than:

- No more than one minor, non-cited accident and one minor moving violation
- No more than two minor, non-cited accidents and no moving violations
- No major moving violations
- No major cited accidents
- A driver's license without any probationary status imposed (indicated with an * on the front of the license)
- No convictions for a seatbelt violation

For Existing Vanpool Drivers eligibility shall be terminated if (within a three (3)-year period) they have:

- More than one minor, non-cited accident and one minor moving violation
- Two minor moving violations
- Any major moving violation
- Any major preventable accident, cited or non-cited
- More than two minor accidents
- A driver's license in probationary status (indicated with an * on their license)
- A conviction for a seatbelt violation
- Multiple complaints (based on severity, frequency, and validity. Vanpool staff reserves the right to suspend or terminate a driver.)

Reinstatement of Vanpool Drivers

Any vanpool driver that requests reinstatement after being ineligible due to a serious accident in a member van requires expressed approval from WSTIP's Executive or Deputy Director or Member Services Manager.

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Definitions

- 1) "Minor Accident" shall be defined as involving less than \$2,500 in total damage and no bodily injury.
- 2) Major accident shall be defined as involving more than \$2,500 in damage and/or bodily injury.
- 3) "Cited" means an accident in which the driver was given a traffic citation for a violation of a law or regulation in connection with any accident.
- 4) "Verifiable" means that the Vanpool Coordinator is provided with copies of documents, which establish damages, facts, and legal outcomes.
- 5) "Major Moving Violations" shall be defined as those in which an accident resulted in a DUI (alcohol/drugs), careless, reckless, negligent, felony, or leaving the scene (hit and run) convictions occurred; suspensions or revocations took place; or speed greater than 10 mph over limit; passing/center line violations; failure to stop; failure to yield; or speeding in a school zone, following too close, driving too fast for conditions, and disobeying construction road signs.
- 6) "Minor Moving Violations" are listed as any violation less significant than those referenced as major violations.

APPENDIX III

LIMITATIONS

The following provisions govern the authorization to operate Vanpool and conditions of use:

1. The van shall at all times be operated in a manner complimentary to the public nature of this program. The van shall be kept clean, driven in a safe manner at all times, and not operated while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. All members shall act in a courteous manner, and the unique character of this van's use shall be explained if such is questioned.
2. Operation of the van is restricted to Agency-approved drivers.
3. The van is to be parked off street at the residence of a Vanpool group member during non-commute hours and as often as possible at other times - or other secured agency-approved location.
4. Personal use of the van is limited as prescribed by the Agency. Such use, if permitted, shall not interfere with the availability of the van for regularly established commuting.
5. The van is not to be used for hire, to pull trailers, boats, etc.; to haul garbage, debris, or excessive loads; or for any purpose requiring the removal of seats.
6. The van is to be driven only on hard-surfaced streets and highways and other normal access roads and driveways. It is not to be driven off-road, on beaches, in fields, outside the state of Washington, or in any other potentially unsafe environment.
7. As with all vans, and particularly the 15-passenger van, the van must be driven in such a manner as to avoid exposure to rollover. Fifteen-passenger van operation should incorporate the recommendations provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for reducing the risk of rollover crashes in the 15-passenger vans.
8. Width and height clearance requirements are to be observed at all times.

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APPENDIX IV

The following is a summary of recommended Vanpool orientation course topics:

1. Brief overview of the role of the Vanpool driver (primary and backup) in the success of the Vanpool program. Highlight safety aspects of driver's role.
2. Discussion of defensive driving and accident preventability - and how your agency defines/handles these issues.
3. Use FLI/National Safety Council program (or equivalent) and information contained in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's hangtag "Reducing the Risk of Rollover Crashes in 15-Passenger Vans," to cover:
 - a. How safe operation of vans presents different challenges than that of conventional private passenger vehicles
 - Sight lines
 - Wheel tracking/turning
 - Center of gravity
 - Wind resistance
 - Acceleration and braking (especially when fully loaded)
 - Stopping distance
 - Rollover resistance and the 15-passenger van
 - b. Proper use of seat belts and shoulder belts
 - c. Accident avoidance
 - Rear end accidents
 - Intersections
 - Passing/being passed
 - Backing
 - Evasive maneuvers and going off the edge of the pavement
 - d. Inclement weather
 - e. Cellular phone usage
 - f. Proper lift utilization (as applicable)
4. Authorized drivers:
 - a. Who are?
 - b. Consequences of accidents involving unauthorized drivers of the van.
5. Personal use:
 - a. If allowed, limits on such use
 - b. Consequences if involved in an accident while using van for personal use - outside the limits established

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6. Van inspection/maintenance - and associated record keeping and reporting. (Recommend use of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA) Hang Tag "Reducing the Risk of Rollover Crashes in 15-passenger vans.")
7. Brief treatment of (or reference to) the following safe driving issues:
 - a. Railroad crossings
 - b. School bus stops
 - c. Anti-lock brakes
 - d. Headlight policy (on during driving operations)
 - e. Head-on collision avoidance
 - f. Self-report of moving violations/accidents
 - g. Self-report of health status change/use of prescription or non-prescription drugs which could affect driving performance
 - h. How to react to animals on/approaching the roadway
 - i. Conflict avoidance/resolution
 - j. Specific issues related to the 15-passenger van including property tire inflation, avoidance of abrupt maneuvers, and what to do if the van goes off the edge of the pavement.
8. Accident/incident reporting and procedures.
9. Brief review of Vanpool accidents of WSTIP member's trends and patterns.

Document History

- Original Version adopted June 17, 1996 by Resolution 5-96 with an effective date of January 1, 1997 by the WSTIP Board of Directors
- Resolution 8-97 adopted March 21, 1997 by the WSTIP Board of Directors gave authority to Executive Committee to adopt revisions to Vanpool Standards
- Revisions adopted by Executive Committee December 5, 2002 including changing title to Vanpool Best Practices and including 15 passenger van issues
- Revisions adopted by Executive Committee June 18, 2003 changing Vanpool Eligibility Criteria