

Request approval to accept a \$72,000 VDRPT grant for a two-year program to start vanpools in Central Virginia

Background:

The CVPDC has for several years been a facilitator and marketer to connect people and carpools through our contract with VDRPT and the Ride Solutions program. www.ridesolutions.org. As a VDRPT Transportation Demand Management (TDM) agency, we offer a variety of services for registered commuters, including the newly-established ridematching software and a guaranteed ride home service.

All of the VDRPT's TDM agencies, except RIDE Solutions, include vanpool programs within their services to regularly take people to jobs. These vanpools can be 7-12 passenger vans and are typically privately operated. The vanpools take people to jobs and may be operated by an entrepreneur or by one of the commuters themselves.

In January the Commission approved a staff request to submit grant application to Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) for a two year program for funds to establish vanpools in our area, to address the job-access needs, especially those employees and employers in the region's rural areas, as articulated in the Lynchburg Connectivity Study and the CEDS. The VDRPT Mobility Grant provides funding for staff to market the program, funding to administer the program, and direct vanpool seat and startup costs reimbursement.

The grant will provide money to subsidize seats while a business, entrepreneur or commuter builds ridership in a vanpool. These funds help the vanpool remain financially stable while building paying ridership. Our role would be to administer those funds on VDRPT's behalf and to market the incentives to folks who might be interested in establishing a vanpool.

When we discussed this in January staff reported a study underway to establish employer data, area transit provider National Transit Database (NTD) recording and Federal Highway funding distribution coordination, for the western portion of the Commonwealth. The study, which includes Thomas Jefferson PDC, Central Shenandoah PDC, New River Valley Regional Commission, West Piedmont PDC, and Roanoke-Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, was expected to be available by now, but it is not yet available.

Next steps for the PDC to incentivize the creation of vanpools in our region

We seek authorization from the Commission to move forward with the following steps:

1. As part of the VDRPT grant we would develop a marketing plan and materials to get the word out about how the private sector and local business can use these incentive funds to create vanpools. This plan will be developed in coordination with local economic developers and other stakeholders.

2. Using our 2019 VDRPT roll-over funds we will contract with AECOM (VDRPT's contractor) for assistance with the creation of the system and policies necessary to manage the vanpool incentives and meet state and federal requirements.
3. Once we have a marketing plan and an approved process/mechanism to administer the incentive funds, we will start the effort to establish vanpools to serve area businesses.
4. This is a two-year grant so it will carry into 2020-2021.

Grant Budget

The VDRPT has approved the Mobility Programs \$72,000 grant award, ~~includes~~ and requires a \$18,000 local match contribution. This is a two-year program; includes \$42,800 (salaries/fringe) and \$28,000 vanpool direct incentive, funds only drawn if used.

Revenue: **\$72,000 – VDRPT funds**
 \$18,000 – local match from PDC
 \$90,000

Expenditures: **\$44,800 salaries/fringe/travel/training**
 \$28,000 direct incentive
 \$17,200 marketing and miscellaneous
 \$90,000

Requested Action:

The Commission is asked to authorize the Executive Director to execute the VDRPT contract as described above and begin a two-year pilot program to establish van pools to serve businesses in the Central Virginia region.

We believe that we should not wait for the multi-region study, but instead move forward with developing a vanpool program, as an additional and valuable employer service. Vanpool subsidies, and match, will only be provided for developed vanpools.