

Casual Carpool Sonoma County

Climate Protection, Everybody Profits
Contest Entry

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Summary

The Casual Carpool Sonoma County, modeled on the currently operating Casual Carpool Bay Area, will offer an easy, enjoyable, and convenient alternative to driving. It will incorporate the best aspects of the current public transportation options including the convenience of the bus system and the comfort of carpools through the Rideshare program through 511.org. In addition, through an organization established around this program, consciousness-raising will occur as part of the mission of the organization. This program will offer a cheaper, carbon reducing way to get to common destinations in the Bay Area from designated locations in the North Bay, specifically, Sonoma County.

Endorsements (Up to 3 people, include emails and phone numbers)

None as of yet

Checks payable to Susanna Kannenberg

Objectives: To reduce emissions for Sonoma County by consolidating transportation of individuals and groups along frequently traveled routes by making carpooling easy, accessible, and enjoyable, and to generate energy around reducing emissions through the creation of an inclusive community that will offer the best promotion capabilities: word of mouth!

Details

Casual Carpool Sonoma County will be modeled on the Casual Carpool program for the San Francisco area, with specific routes and pick-up/drop-off spots that parallel highly trafficked current transit routes (see table 1) and specific, regular pick-up times. In addition, routes will be added for special events and seasonal shifts in travel as needed and as drivers are available. However, a new aspect to the program is that it is intended to become something of a cooperative or community, and for the riders to take on some degree of responsibility for its functioning, and for it to have the goal of promoting emission reduction awareness.

Along this notion, there will be a board of directors, a mission statement, and an effort to gain 501C-3 status eventually, whether that be through a relationship with a current nonprofit or independently. A monthly or yearly membership fee will be optional, which will afford riders and drivers some benefits, however, the program will still be available to the public. The membership fee will function like a transit pass, but will carry additional benefits beyond Casual Carpool rider fee discounts, such as the ability to elect board members and the program manager. All aspects of the organization will be revisited annually and revised as needed by the board, offering the ability for members to vote on issues such as new routes, new policies, mission statement revision, participation in local events, modification of fees etc.

Drivers will be volunteer members who choose to participate in the program as drivers, much like the current carpooling strategy used by 511.org, who are already planning on making the drive. Additional drivers will be recruited, still as volunteers, for routes and times that are not already filled by other drivers. Drivers will be limited to members so that some degree of training can be offered helping drivers to operate safely and effectively in their duty. Issues such as child safety and dealing with difficult passengers will be covered in new driver training.

Communication will occur through a blog as the San Francisco area program is set up, although with the injection of funds through the winning of this contest, a full website will be dedicated to the program, and will ideally be linked to the 511.org Rideshare tool. Part of the objective of this project would be to fully integrate the Casual Carpool Sonoma County program with the 511.org Rideshare program, which would allow for the San Francisco area Casual Carpool program the ability to become integrated also.

The rider fee will be within a designated range (\$1-\$10) depending on the distance of the drive. This is slightly different from the currently operating Bay Area Casual Carpool program (in which any fee is up to the discretion of the driver) and the current carpooling program through Rideshare (which encourages each carpool to agree ahead of time on the financial responsibilities of each rider). The primary reason for this is that the distance between destinations is much greater in the North Bay than in the Bay Area. The rider fee will go towards the fuel for the vehicle and the management of the program. The manager will be an elected individual, who will be paid a nominal amount directly relating to the time spent and tools needed for management. The manager is expected to spend not more than 10 hours per week managing the program; it will not be employment.

Since this program replicates one already successfully in operation in the Bay Area, I

believe there will be no political challenges interfering with its implementation. As far as its replication, the major concern would be that the primary difference between the Bay Area and the North Bay Area is that there are far more individuals commuting in the San Francisco area, and that public transportation is far more common there. However, that very concern, I believe is addressed with this plan since the comparably greater dependence on cars in the north is largely due to the greater distances traveled by individuals and their need for a flexible, convenient, and enjoyable alternative to the bus system, which is not as enjoyable as riding in a car to many people, and the carpooling system, which is not as convenient as driving in a car or riding a bus.

Since these programs rely mostly on the need for a specific area, I believe this program will allow for its replication in other areas, as it is a replication of another program tailored to the Bay Area, but that most likely it will remain primarily a program in Sonoma County only. However, its integration with the 511.org Rideshare program, and its relationship with the Bay Area Casual Carpool program will be the seed for the scaling of the program to serve larger areas.

With the development of the blog and website, the relationship with the Bay Area Casual Carpool, as well as the integration with 511.org, the plan will be to expand the promotion of the program such that the benefits of carpooling in general, as well as the Casual Carpool program in particular will become available and accessible to all individuals. In addition, special care has been taken in the development of routes and pick-up/drop-off locations and times to ensure that all social groups and populations will have easy access to the program. Finally, as the program is implemented, since it is directly related to the need in the area through the participation of drivers and riders,

Initial Routes and Pick-up/Drop-Off Locations

These are examples, more research is necessary to determine the final list of routes and locations. Each of these locations would serve as both a pick-up and a drop-off location, and routes in between would run both to and from each location to the others.

Pick-Up and Drop off Locations
Santa Rosa Courthouse Square
Sebastopol Square
Downtown Petaluma
Downtown Healdsburg
Wells Fargo Center for the Arts
Popular Events (i.e. Harmony Festival)
Downtown Cotati
Sonoma State University
Santa Rosa Junior College
Kaiser Permanente Medical Center
Sutter Medical Center
Railroad Square Santa Rosa
Downtown Windsor
San Francisco
Oakland
San Jose

Barriers this solution will address:

Part of the difficulty with implementing transit emissions-reduction programs in the North Bay area is that our commercial centers are much farther apart than the more developed urban areas to the south. So, bike riding, for example, because it takes so much longer than driving for many people to travel between frequented destinations, is much more likely to be viewed as a recreational activity than a commuting option. In addition, in Sonoma County, our main public transportation options, other than pre-scheduled carpools and vanpools, are busses. We don't have such fun and enjoyable public transportations that the San Francisco area has such as the streetcars or the BART.

Carpooling, however, is a desirable option for individuals to commute between destinations, as it is just as fast as driving themselves, allows individuals to avoid driving costs (gasoline and tolls) and parking issues (trouble finding parking and paying for parking), reduces traffic, pollution, offers the enjoyment and comfort of a car or van. However, the currently available carpooling options available require a specific schedule that individuals must set up ahead of time. The Casual Carpool program provides a way for people to take advantage of all the benefits of both the carpool and bus transit systems, and therefore, I believe would decrease the number of drivers on the road and thus reduce emissions county and region-wide.

Finally, this program is intended to grow and generally contribute to consciousness-raising about emissions reduction and alternatives to single-driver transportation. In the future, the hope is that this program will partner with other organizations to continually increase awareness of the issues it addresses, and to branch out into additional issues relating to climate change.

Amount and timeline of emissions to be reduced:

Emissions reduction would begin immediately upon the first Casual Carpool ride. The expectation is that the program would take six months to a year to really catch on.

Approximately 0.875 pounds pounds of CO₂ are saved per mile per Casual Carpool rider, presuming they leave a 2003 Toyota Camry at home, and drives an average of 12,000 miles per year. This number is a very gross estimate, of course, but serves the purpose here.

Based on the above number, presuming Casual Carpool provides one 15-mile ride with five riders per day (conservative estimate), we would be saving approximately **23,953 pounds** of CO₂ in one year.

Estimated Budget

Aside from the prize seed money, there will be no investment in this project. It is solely a volunteer run program. All savings will go to the riders and members of the program. Each rider will save themselves however much they pay in car maintenance and fuel per mile in the carpool, with parking and bridge tolls included, this can amount to a lot of money!

The annual membership fees and the rider fees will go 70% to fueling vehicles, and 30% to management costs. There will be an elected Treasurer on the board to manage finances. The prize money from this contest will be solely start-up money, and beyond that the organization

should run without profits, and without costs beyond what the fees will provide. The membership fee and rider per mile fee will be determined by the board based on the initial routes upon launch of the program and from then on, members will have the opportunity to revise this fee through voting quarterly and annually.