



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Nov. 30, 2012

## **Meeting set on ridesharing for Bloomington residents who work in Indy**

Each day, more than 3,000 Bloomington residents get into their cars and drive north to Marion County to work. Each evening, they turn around and make the trek back home. And, even though so many of them are headed in the same direction, only a fraction of these commuters are sharing rides.

Commuter Connect wants to change that, helping commuters save money, reduce stress, ease the burden on our highways and improve the environment by carpooling or vanpooling. The organization provides free “matchmaking” services connecting people who could share rides, in addition to a wide range of other commuter services.

An information meeting is set for Dec. 18 at 7 p.m. at the Monroe County Public Library.

“We already have two 12 passenger vanpools with a total of 22 people that travel between Bloomington and Indianapolis every day, and we regularly get calls from people from Bloomington who are interested in sharing rides to work,” said Lori Kaplan, business development and vanpool manager for Commuter Connect.

With approximately 3,300 Bloomington residents working in Marion County, according to the 2010 U.S. Census and Commuter Connect, the potential impact of the program is considerable. “The two existing vanpools alone have taken 20 vehicles off the road, which is a benefit to all the others who are driving State Road 37,” added Kaplan. “We can help folks who are interested find others whose schedules, home locations and work locations are compatible.”

While carpoolers share rides in one of their fellow commuters’ vehicles, the vanpool service available through Commuter Connect actually supplies a van to groups of five to 15 commuters. Residents who take advantage of this service stand to save thousands of dollars in transportation costs each year.

The fuel cost alone for the 110-mile daily round trip commute is more than \$400 per month with fuel at the current average price of \$3.50 a gallon. When the hidden costs – such as routine maintenance, insurance and vehicle depreciation – are factored in, the real cost of commuting 110 miles round trip daily can exceed \$1,300 a month, and \$16,500 a year. That’s more than half the value of many new cars.

By contrast, the average cost for the Bloomington folks who commute to Indy in one of the existing vanpools is \$110 per month.

“The benefits far outweigh saving money,” said Derek Johnson, a Bloomington resident who works in downtown Indy. “We catch up on emails, reading, sleeping and all sorts of things so that when we arrive at our destinations, we’re relaxed. Our families also get to reap the benefit of our less stressful commute when we arrive back home with more energy at the end of the day.”

Commuter Connect helps in other ways, too, by helping commuters and their employers identify financial incentives and benefits available to people who ride share. According to federal law, employers can provide a transit benefit of up to \$125 a month to defray costs of public transit, which include public bus service and vanpooling. For employees who do not receive such a benefit, Commuter Connect currently provides a monthly subsidy of \$50 per passenger for vanpooling. Vanpool participants with a 110-mile daily commute who take advantage of the Commuter Connect subsidy can reduce their annual commute costs by more than \$16,500.

Commuter Connect, a service of CIRTA, the Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority, helps connect commuters with various commuting alternatives – carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus, biking and walking. To learn more, visit [www.CommuterConnect.us](http://www.CommuterConnect.us).

Commuter Connect is funded through a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant, designed to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

WHAT: Public meeting to discuss starting commuter vanpools

WHEN: 7 p.m., Dec. 18

WHERE: Monroe County Public Library, Meeting Room 1C, 303 E. Kirkwood Ave.,  
Bloomington

WHO: Commuter Connect, a service of CIRTA (Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority)

INFO: [www.CommuterConnect.us](http://www.CommuterConnect.us) or 317-327-RIDE (7433)

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