



Florida Department of Transportation Launches Rural Vanpool Program, 60% of Cost Covered by FDOT

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has identified the counties of Desoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, portions of Collier, and the community of Immokalee, as areas of critical concern in the Southwest Florida region. These counties share many of the same economic challenges including low income areas, high unemployment rates, lack of stable year-round employment opportunities, and limited access to public transportation. In order to help relieve some of the financial burden on residents of these counties, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has acquired funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for 2009 to subsidize 60% of the total monthly vanpool cost for commuters that participate in the Rural Vanpool Program.

This means that vanpool groups only pay 40% of their total monthly vanpool cost, as well as fuel and taxes, and the remaining 60% of the vanpool cost is paid by FDOT using the stimulus funds.

The goal of the program is to provide affordable, reliable transportation for commuters in the affected counties as they travel to and from their jobs. The program also hopes to aid employers as they recruit for their workforce needs. By having an affordable vanpool program in place, employers will be able to recruit from areas further away from the work site as well as gain improvement in employee retention.

FDOT has a public/private partnership with VPSI, Inc. to launch the Rural Vanpool Program. VPSI has been a private provider of public transportation services in Florida since 1985 and is currently the largest commuter vanpool services provider in the world. VPSI will provide the vanpool vehicles, automobile insurance, maintenance package and program management. *Commuter Services*, a free program sponsored by the FDOT, is available to help worksites with ridematching services, outreach and marketing, an Emergency Ride Home program, rewards program and bilingual services.

If you are interested in learning more about the Rural Vanpool Program and how it can benefit your organization and employees, please call David Bannar or Jon Chase at VPSI, Inc., **1-800-VAN-RIDE**, david.bannar@vpsiinc.com, jon.chase@vpsiinc.com

For more information about the *Commuter Services* program, please contact *Commuter Services* Program Director Christine Diaz, **1-866-585-RIDE (7433)**; Christine.Diaz@dot.state.fl.us, or visit: www.CommuterServicesFL.com