



# Deliver Business Solutions with Employee Vanpooling

Here's how two Oregon companies are leaning into employee vanpooling to serve critical business needs.



## Teri Butler, HR Manager, Freres Engineered Wood

Family-owned and operated for over 102 years, Freres Engineered Wood produces high-quality building products that've been used in many notable local and North American projects—among which includes the Portland International Airport's new interior wood lattice ceiling spanning a football field's length. The company, located in Lyons, Oregon, operates six production facilities and boasts a workforce of over 420 employees.



## Why did Freres decide to start an employee vanpool program?

Freres runs multiple production facilities, including 24/7 operations, so we have sizable workforce needs. We're rurally located outside of Salem with a fairly limited local labor pool that was significantly reduced after homes were destroyed in the 2020 fires. Employee vanpooling offered a solution that enables us to retain staff living farther away, plus serve our ongoing recruitment efforts.

## How did you set up your vanpool program?

We'd heard about vanpool support services being offered by our local transit provider, Cherriots, and Commute with Enterprise. Both helped us create a turnkey employee vanpool program. They helped match employees into vanpools onsite and by using cluster maps of home addresses. Commute with Enterprise provided reliable rental vehicles and insurance, organized employees into 10 total vanpools, and handled ongoing management. Plus, Cherriots offered a subsidy to offset vanpool costs.

## How has your vanpool program benefited Freres?

We've realized many business benefits from our employee vanpool program since launching it over a year ago. Vanpooling makes our employees' long commutes and work experience more enjoyable, which, in turn, supports staff retention. Our vanpool program has served as an effective recruiting tool, too. And, notably, employee vanpooling has aided on-time staff arrival that benefits our operational efficiency and productivity.



## Any advice for other employers starting employee vanpool programs?

Start by involving leadership in how employee vanpooling can benefit business operations and develop a plan covering vanpool set up and ongoing management. Free support services are available to help you build and run your vanpool program.



### **Dennis Bell, HR Manager, Meduri Farms**

Meduri Farms is a family-owned and operated producer, distributor, and innovator of dried fruit for the food and beverage industry, which boasts a workforce of over 280 employees. Meduri is a global leader in a wide variety of dried fruits, most notably craft-dried blueberries, offered in an array of formats and sizes. Meduri Farm's state-of-the-art headquarters in Dallas, Oregon, include infusion and drying capabilities, a packaging line, R&D capabilities, and an on-site service team.



### **What led Meduri Farms to start an employee vanpool program?**

Meduri Farms' dried fruit production facilities are rurally located west of Salem with limited housing and transit options for our employees. Before the pandemic, we'd contracted with the school district to provide a daily Salem shuttle service using their buses to make commuting easier. Yet, bus driver shortages and increased costs led us to start an employee vanpool program that's more cost effective and better accommodates our employees' commute needs.

### **How did you build your vanpool program?**

We'd learned our local transit provider, Cherriots, and Commute with Enterprise offer employee vanpool support services at a local community meeting. Together, we created an employee vanpool program tailored to our work culture and employee commute needs. We identified vanpool drivers among our staff and posted and passed out rider signup sheets. A total of 75 interested employees were sorted geographically and grouped into 9 initial vanpools. Meetings were held with each group to identify pickup locations and times. Commute with Enterprise provided the rental vehicles, insurance, and maintenance, and Cherriots offered a subsidy to offset vanpool costs.

### **How do your employee vanpools work?**

Identified staff serve as vanpool drivers for the 14 vanpools our program currently operates. Drivers pickup riders at either their houses or a designated location. And we've got backup drivers on standby in case primary drivers are unable to drive. Commute with Enterprise handles ongoing vanpool management, including processing monthly payments, identifying replacement riders, and providing vehicle maintenance and roadside assistance.



### **What benefits has your employee vanpool program netted?**

Many employees don't drive or have access to a reliable vehicle so being able to vanpool into work with a co-worker driving has helped improve staff retention. Employees often used to struggle with getting to work. Nearly 25% of our workforce today relies on our vanpool program to access their jobs, and it's helped recruit new employees. Vanpooling builds employee connection and strengthens our work culture, too.



**Get There Oregon, our local partners, & Commute with Enterprise can help you start a vanpool program!**

- ▶ Consultation & program planning
- ▶ Vanpool matching & management
- ▶ Vehicle rental, maintenance, & insurance

**Contact: [Employers@GetThereOregon.org](mailto:Employers@GetThereOregon.org)**