



# METRO STAR

## Vanpool Manual

### 2023-2024

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## WELCOME MESSAGE

METRO STAR is pleased with your recent decision to join us on one of our STAR routes. As part of our team, we would like to officially welcome you and your group of commuters aboard. Our goal is to create a smooth transition into the METRO STAR vanpool program. This manual will provide you with important information and phone numbers and will be a handy reference for you in the future.

We ask you print a copy of this manual and keep it in the glovebox of your van. This manual serves as a guide for all vanpool members. Please also add [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org) to your accepted senders list.

**Your STAR Vanpool Number is: \_\_\_\_\_**

Thanks so much for becoming part of STAR.

Welcome Aboard!

The signed Van Agreement also titled as Volunteer Driver Agreement, has been signed between METRO STAR and your vanpool group. The Driver/Group Leader has been designated as the representative of the vanpool and will be the vanpool's point of contact for METRO STAR and /or the designated service provider.

Although the Driver has signed the van agreement, it is the group, as a whole, that should guarantee the vehicles and its passengers' wellbeing.

All Vanpool participants should review and familiarize themselves to the terms of the van agreement. Therein, the vanpooler will have details as what has been agreed to such as:

- Responsibilities towards the vehicle
- Conditions required to drive
- Driving distance limitations
- Requirements in case of an incident
- Payment Obligations
- Unauthorized uses

The Van Agreement also presents the vanpool group with conditions That METRO STAR agrees to and stipulates as a standard practice related to certain circumstances such as vehicle terminations, insurance coverage limitations and changes/cancellations to the signed agreement.

It must be noted that your van agreement is subject to change and /or termination under the, but not limited to the following conditions:

- Improper use and handling of the vehicle
- Required switch of the vehicle due to manufacturer recalls, high mileage on the vehicle or for other miscellaneous requests. In regard to high mileage, METRO STAR reserves the right to request that your vanpool be retired once a certain mileage threshold has been reached. This threshold varies based on:
  - The mileage tier that is indicated in your van agreement
  - Total miles on the vehicle
  - Make & model
  - Production Year
  - Vehicle overall Condition

When deemed necessary METRO STAR will work with the vanpool group to properly manage any such switches which will also require the signing of a new van agreement.

If further details or clarifications are required regarding your van agreement you can contact your Vanpool representative at: 713-224-RIDE (7433) or email us at [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org).

## REPORTING

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Now that your route is on the road and you are part of STAR it is important for you to keep in touch with us about any changes that take place: to your drivers, you're starting or ending location, the route you take to work, or the people on your van. This information is key to fulfilling our insurance obligations protecting you and your riders.

- **To notify us about a change in your starting or ending location, the route you take to work, just send an email to [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org). In your email, make sure you include your Primary Driver or Group Leader's name and your STAR route (or V) number listed for you in the Welcome section of this manual. We will be able to make the change and let you know if there is any additional information, we need from you or if your monthly mileage allowance should change.**
- ❓ **Before you change your primary driver or add an alternate driver, we need to make sure a driver application is completed, and the rider is approved to drive.** To request a driver application or a driver change, please email [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org).
- ❓ Information on adding and removing riders from your route is located on the next page.

### MONTHLY RIDERSHIP REPORTS

METRO STAR is a regional vanpool program supported by public dollars. The federal funds used to support this program help us reduce the cost of STAR for all customers. The availability of this financial benefit is linked to each vanpool group submitting a monthly ridership report.

**Each month your group will need to submit a monthly ridership report to STAR online at <https://www.ridemetroapp.org/Ridepro35/account/signin>.** This is usually done by the vanpool coordinator or primary driver. STAR Customer Service can grant access to the ridership logs to only one participant in the vanpool group. Please make sure you notify STAR if this point of contact changes at any time. These logs will record the monthly odometer reading as well as each commuter's ridership data for that calendar month. This data will be sent to METRO STAR. Ridership logs are due by the *third business day of each month*. If you miss the deadline, or need assistance, please contact STAR Customer Service at 713-224-7433. A Customer Service Representative will contact you to walk you through the process and ensure access. Additional instructions are included with this manual.



## ADDING OR REMOVING RIDERS/ PART-TIME RIDERS

### ADDING A RIDER

Riders may request to join a route online using the steps below, or they may call STAR at 713-224-RIDE (7433).

1. Register online with STAR at <http://star.ridemetro.org>.
2. Use the left-hand navigation button to click “Request to Join a Vanpool”.
3. Using the search box in the middle of the page, search for and select the desired route (ex. V1234).
4. The driver/contact for the route will receive an automated email from STAR.
5. The driver responds confirming the new commuter and start date.

### REMOVING A RIDER

Email [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org) with the route number (ex: V1965), name of rider(s) to remove and when he/they will stop riding. STAR requires a 30-day notice for rider removal.

### PART-TIME RIDER STATUS

A part-time rider rides fewer than 12 round trips per month. A group may choose to accept part-time riders. The recommended day rate for part-time riders is the monthly per rider cost divided by 22.

A rider can switch from being part-time to full-time if space is available. To make this change, send an email to [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org) with the name of the rider and the requested change. Full-time riders ride at least 24 one way or 12 round trips monthly.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REMINDER

### AN IMPORTANT STAR BENEFIT

Each STAR participant receives public support to lower vanpool costs. This amount equals approximately one third of the average monthly cost. To ensure public support continues, STAR encourages groups to keep their vanpool routes at maximum ridership and allow access to eligible riders. Keeping STAR routes at or near maximum ridership also produces the lowest monthly cost for each rider. Not doing so may result in the loss of public funds and potential termination of the STAR route.

### STAR SUPPORT

Please feel free to share this public transportation reminder with all STAR participants--drivers, riders and employers. If you have any questions or need assistance searching for riders, please contact STAR at 713-224-RIDE or [star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org). Together, we are helping reduce Houston-area congestion, improve the air quality and conserve energy.

## STAR PASSENGER RULES

As a passenger on a METRO STAR vanpool, a public transportation service, you have the following duties and responsibilities to your fellow passengers and to METRO STAR:

1. I will arrive at STAR vanpool meeting locations on or before agreed departure times.
2. I will maintain contact with the group regarding any changes in my ability to meet the STAR vanpool route on time.
3. I will conduct myself in a manner considerate of my fellow STAR vanpool members.
4. I will pay my share of our STAR vanpool costs, on or before the due date, each month.
5. I understand that my monthly share of cost may change subject to total riders, fuel costs, tolls or other direct operating costs.
6. I understand that failure to pay my share in a complete and timely manner can result in suspension of STAR services, penalties, and applicable collection steps.
7. I will give our group notice of no less than 30 days in the event I withdraw from participating in the STAR vanpool route.
8. In the event that I transfer to another STAR vanpool route, I will observe the rules and financial responsibilities of that route.
9. I will abide by vanpool rules as determined by STAR, and by any group rules, as long as they are not in conflict with STAR operating policies, which have been agreed upon by the majority of passengers and driver(s) of our vanpool.
10. I understand that I may communicate directly with STAR and/or STAR with me regarding financial, customer service or other matters related to proper operation of this STAR vanpool route.
11. I understand that a portion of my monthly STAR cost is paid with public funds and, in certain cases, by my employer. I understand if I fail to provide timely payments, accurate information and comply with rider requirements, I may become subject to public and/or employer penalties, liable for the full cost of STAR services consumed, and terminated from access to STAR services.
12. I acknowledge that METRO STAR has the right to change policies, procedures, and financial requirements for participation at any given time.



## VANPOOL TIPS AND ETIQUETTE

1. Create and agree upon your own “Rules of the Road” right from the start. STAR has provided a few rules of the road to help you start the process for your vanpool group.
2. Establish a chain of communication so schedule adjustments can be made quickly and easily. Every Vanpool group should have a Coordinator so that you can update them with current contact information such as email address and phone numbers.
3. Decide on a regular route and pick-up time for each passenger, including how long the vanpool will wait for latecomers.
4. Remember that Texas law requires the use of seat belts. Vanpoolers must wear seat restraints at all times when the vehicle is in operation.
5. Drivers must not use cellular phones or other hands-free devices while operating the vehicle.
6. When possible, back into parking spaces for easy departure.
7. Vanpoolers should pull out of a parking space or drive to a designated location to pick-up riders so van doors do not bump or scratch surrounding vehicles and for safer boarding.
8. Always allow extra time in adverse weather conditions.
9. It is best to resolve all issues quickly and efficiently as they arise. If you feel differences amongst the group are not reconcilable, please contact STAR Customer Service for assistance.

### OTHER TIPS:

- Agree on issues such as temperature, eating or drinking in the vehicle and radio use.
- Be aware of personal hygiene and avoid the use of strong scents to which others may be allergic.
- If you decide vanpooling isn't for you, give your vanpool Coordinator a 30-day notice allowing time to recruit another rider.
  
- Keep your vehicle clean and in safe condition at all times.
- Always maintain enough fuel to make a round-trip before leaving each morning. This will keep your vanpool on schedule.
  
- Refrain from smoking until you are out and away from the vehicle.
- Respect fellow vanpooler wishes, especially those in need of some quiet time; don't feel like you need to talk all the time. Headphones may be used for riders only.
- Know where your pick-up is and always meet your vanpool group on time, if possible.
- While this is not required, many groups assign seats based upon some agreed format (seniority, pick up/drop off origin, etc.), while some groups rotate seats on a regular basis. Know what your group prefers and stick to the plan.

## MAINTENANCE AND EMERGENCIES

### GENERAL MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of your vanpool vehicle is extremely important for the comfort and safety of your commute. The good news is that all maintenance is included in the STAR vanpool vehicle lease with our vehicle provider, Enterprise.

Contact Enterprise when scheduled maintenance is needed for your van. Enterprise may also reach out to you when scheduled maintenance is due. While some vehicles have indicators for oil changes, generally scheduled maintenance is required every 7,500 miles.

For unscheduled maintenance, for instance, if your air conditioner isn't cooling properly or something similar, please contact Enterprise to arrange for service. A loaner vehicle may be issued if your repair may take an extended amount of time

Keeping the vehicle clean is also very important and should be done a minimum of once per month. Tire pressure should also be checked on a periodic basis.

### GLASS REPAIR

Call Enterprise office at the first sight of glass damage on your vanpool vehicle. An Enterprise representative will arrange for the glass to be repaired or replaced. Most can be done on-site at your employer<sup>++</sup>.

***++Some employers do not allow onsite repair.***

### REGISTRATION RENEWAL

Please call Enterprise 30 days in advance of your registration expiring to arrange for the annual vehicle inspection. The renewal sticker will be mailed to the group a couple of weeks after the inspection takes place. Please keep in mind that the State of Texas will not issue a new Registration for the vanpool vehicle until it has successfully passed the annual inspection process.

#### **Important Contacts**

##### **For Maintenance:**

Lynn Seibel

Enterprise

346-331-6471

[Lynn.e.seibel@ehi.com](mailto:Lynn.e.seibel@ehi.com)

##### **In case of Accidents/Incidents/ or Breakdowns:**

Enterprise (8AM -5PM)

346-331-6471

##### **Enterprise Roadside Assistance:**

(After 5 PM)

1-800-VAN-4-WORK

## EMERGENCIES

### ACCIDENTS OR INCIDENTS

Report all accidents, incidents, vehicle damage, or theft to Enterprise within 24 hours. An accident is defined as occurring when you hit someone or something or someone or something hits you while driving your vanpool vehicle. An incident is defined as occurring if a part is stolen from the van, an act of vandalism takes place or when an act of nature damages the van. If you are involved in an accident, regardless of injuries, please contact your local law enforcement. If you are involved in an accident with injuries, please contact 911. Always cooperate with law enforcement and do not leave the scene until you have been officially released. When you call Enterprise, a tow will be arranged for your vehicle, if it cannot be driven, and transportation can be arranged for your group to continue to your destination.

### VEHICLE BREAKDOWNS

If the vanpool vehicle breaks down, please contact Enterprise. A tow will be arranged if needed and alternate transportation arranged also for the vanpool group if needed. You may be issued a loaner vehicle at that time.

### ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Should you have an emergency outside normal business hours (8 AM – 5 PM), please call 1-800-VAN-4-WORK for Roadside Assistance and follow the prompts. You will need the following information before calling:

1. Vanpool ID Number
2. Current Vehicle Location
3. License Plate Number/VIN
4. Total Number of Passengers in the vehicle
5. Your destination

## TOLL TAGS

If you utilize the toll road, please make sure you have a toll tag. If you have a permanent van switch, remember to remove the toll tag from your old vehicle and order a replacement tag for your new vehicle.

If you have a service loaner van, you will need to add the service loaner van temporarily to your appropriate toll road account.

Be sure to register your toll tag, the toll tag must match the vehicle type and license number on record with the toll road authority. If you proceed to remove the tag from your old van and place it on the new van it will deactivate the chip inside. When the chip is damaged, the tag will not be read in the tolling lanes resulting in toll violations.

Please note if you receive any violations resulting from not registering or damaging your toll tag your vanpool will be subjected to toll tag violations and be responsible for any related charges. All toll tag violations will be added to the van group's invoice and it will be your responsibility to pay.

Please contact the Toll Road Authority (HCTRA or TX Tag) to obtain a new toll tag and use your Vanpool Fuel MasterCard as the form of payment. The billing address to enter is 1900 Main, Houston, TX 77002. You may contact STAR Fleet at 713-224-7433 if you have any questions. Please pass along this memo to all members of your vanpool.

All registered STAR vanpoolers are eligible for the Emergency Ride Home (ERH) program. This service is available for midday emergencies or instances where the commuter may have to work overtime. Each STAR participant is eligible for **three ERH rides per calendar year**. An emergency is defined as an unscheduled event such as illness, your vanpool suddenly not being available, or family illness or emergency.

Contact **STAR Customer Service at 713-224-7433** between 8:00AM and 4:00 PM to schedule the emergency ride. The transportation service will usually arrive within 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the availability of transportation in your area. STAR will cover transportation fare for the commuter with the exception of tolls and tips. Tipping is at the discretion of the rider and is not reimbursable.

Should an emergency arise outside the hours of STAR Customer Service, keep the receipt for the eligible ride and STAR will reimburse the fare.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

### BILLING BASICS

STAR monthly costs are pre-billed. For example, during the month of April a bill will be emailed to the group's primary contact for the month of May.

The bill will include:

- ❑ A charge for the lease.
- ❑ A list of riders.
- ❑ A fuel card estimate including fuel, tolls, and parking.
- ❑ Employer incentive credits or payroll deductions.
- ❑ A link for credit card payment.

The primary contact should forward the bill to all members of the group. It is very important that billing is transparent for all members.

### PRE-BILLING

Billing is initially based on information submitted with the group's formation paperwork. The first two invoices will reflect these estimates. The third invoice will also include a reconciliation of actual expenses from the first invoice.

If actual costs are more than the estimate, an additional charge would be included on the next bill. If the actual costs are less than the estimate, a credit would be issued. From the third month on, each invoice will include the estimate for the coming month and reconciliation (charge or credit) for two months prior.

### CHANGES TO ROSTER/RIDER LIST

Changes to the vanpool's roster/ list of riders should be made by the 5th of the month to show up on the next month's bill. When making roster changes remember vanpool is a month-to-month commitment and riders should give a 30-day notice to their group prior to leaving their route. Riders are responsible for their bills up to 30 days after they give notice to leave the route.

## DIVIDING THE BILL

The majority of STAR vanpool groups divide the bill in one of the following ways:

- ❑ Shared-cost model- Riders share the responsibility of driving and split the bill evenly.
- Driver- discount model – One or two people drive most of the time and the group agrees to pay for all or part of the driver(s) costs.
- ❑ Part-time riders should pay a daily rate of the monthly per rider cost divided by 22.

## MAKING PAYMENTS

STAR payments can be made to the driver, who will pay STAR, or can be made to STAR directly. Direct payments to STAR can be made in several ways: employer transportation benefit, pre-tax deduction, check or online by credit card. STAR does not accept cash. If challenges arise in collecting money from your group, please contact STAR at 713-224-RIDE (7433).

## STAR FUEL CARD

Each van is issued a STAR fuel card. The fuel card can only be used to fill up the vanpool vehicle, for tolls and car washes. Cards should be used outside at fuel pumps, not inside stores. Cards may not work at: grocery store fuel stations or at stations that have had a lot of fraudulent activity. Cards may be used for small purchases at Auto Zone for items such as emergency wiper blade replacements or window washing fluid. If you have any problems with your fuel card, please contact STAR at 713-224-7433.

METRO STAR  
713-224-RIDE (7433)  
<http://star.ridemetro.org>  
[star@ridemetro.org](mailto:star@ridemetro.org)

The STAR team can assist you with any of your vanpool requests including:

- Roster changes: additions, deletions, or status changes.
- Filling empty seats for low ridership.
- Aiding for the submission of monthly Ridership logs.
- The submission of maintenance requests.
- The delivery of your vehicle.
- Van agreement related issues including changing the size of your van or terminating your van agreement for any reason.
- Driver application approvals or Group Leader/Coordinator switches.
- Issuance of the Fuel card.
- Billing.

We are available to assist you Monday through Friday, 8AM through 5PM.

**THANK YOU FOR BEING A STAR!!!**