SEMCOG ready to help employers with 'vanpooling'

Major employers are taking an interest in setting up gasoline-saving vanpools for their workers.

Personnel directors from 16 companies or institutions have buzzed the
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments at 961-4266 since the program
was announced May 17. SEMOOC says
it's "sitting here with free assistance
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Steve Woody, a staff member for the regional planning agency, said he has bad inquries from such diverse firms as bad inquries from such diverse firms as DArcy-MacManus & Massius, Inc., the advertising firm in Bloomfield Hills, Parke-Davis, the pharmaceutical firm in Detroit; Annapolis Hospital, Wayne; he Michigan Credit Union League and Sinai Hospital, both in Southfield; Ped-rail Mogul and Beethle Power, both in Ann Arbor; Volkswager, of America, Warren; and Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit.

"THE SOUTHEAST Michigan region has been fortunate so far with a seem-ingly adequate supply of gasoline," said James P. Grannan, chairman of SEMCOG's vanpooling task force (SEMVAN).

"But we've all seen what's happening in California and other states, and we don't want the same consumer frustration occurring here.

"We urge employers to investigate the possibility of vanpools for their people."

The task force was appointed last November by SEMCOG Chairman Da-vid H. Shepherd, mayor of Oak Park. It attempts to attack multiple problems: energy consumption, traffic conges-tion, air pollution and parking.

It has the blessing of the Southeast-ern Michigan Transportation Authori-ty, which has been unable to buy buses fast enough to meet the demand for more public transportation.

"WE ARE PROPOSING that large employers in the region — those with 500 or more employees — lease or pur-chase vans from private industry for use by their own employees," said Grannan.

"Employers with overcrowded parking lots may be interested to know that it costs \$500 to \$700 today to construct one parking space, plus the cost of the land. And if you need deck parking, the cost is \$3,500 to \$4,000 per space, plus land.

"If just one van operates a daily 50-mile round trip, it saves 5,000 gallons

of gas per year, takes eight cars off the road and out of parking lots, and pre-vents four tons of pollutants from en-tering the air.

"Vanpoolers themselves can reap significant benefits," Grannan added. "The average commuter fare in a van-pool program is \$45 a month, based on a 50-mile round trip."

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He praised Blue Cross-Blue Shield and the Automobile Club of Michigan for setting up SEMOCG-assisted vanpools for employees. "The Auto Club, headquartered in Dearborn, is a new-comer to the vanpooling program and will soon have three vans operating at a savings of some 15,000 gallons of gas.

WHAT KIND of help will SEMCOG offer?

It has information on

· How to promote a vanpooling pro-

gram.
• How to match interested employees

How to match interested employees into vanpoi groups.

*How to organize the vanpool as far so drivers routes, fares, incarace, tri-al runs, cash flow and bosokeeping. For exmaple, SEMCOG can stirms how to use grid maps to match persons in vanpool groups and provid samples of promotional material. Among members of the vanpool task force were Breat O. Bair, transportation planning coordinator for the Oakhald County Road Commission, and State Rep. Robert Law, R-Livonia.

LAW IS AUTHOR of a series of house bills to help form vanpools.

The bills would provide a gasoline and sales tax exemption and a state income tax and single business tax credit as incentives to emplyees and employers.

ers.

If they are passed, vanpoolers would be entitled to a refund on the tax they pay on gasoline to operate the van. Employers would receive an income tax credit to offset their ride sharing costs and contributions.

A single business tax credit would be allowed for the net costs paid or accrued for organizing, promoting and administering a vampool program. And vanpool vehicles with a seating capacity of 15 would qualify for a sales tax

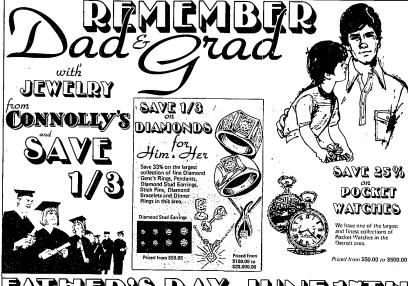
Vanpool programs would be exempt from the no-fault insurance law, as are school buses, public transportation ser-vices and taxis.



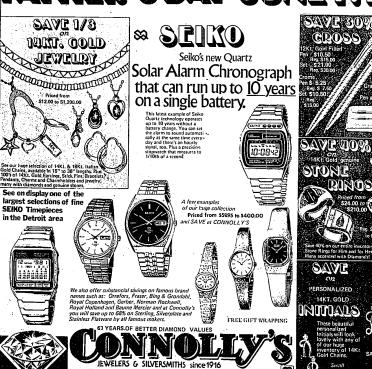
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