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Two Proposals to Markedly Improve Commuter HOV Ridership

Goals

1. Reduce Traffic Congestion.
2. Reduce Dependence on Foreign Oil.
3. Reduce Global Warming.
4. Reduce Pollution.
5. Reduce Current Financial Strain on the Middle-Class.

Two Versions

1. **Van-based system** (Possible government involvement, with private partnership).
2. **Web-based carpool system** (Little or no government involvement, likely with an Internet-based company, e.g. Google).

1. SmarteVan, a Smart-Commute Van-Based System:

- A van-based system for commuters that could be called something like *SmarteVan*, with a logo that states, “...we’ll customize your commute”.
- “Nodes” are interspersed every 3-5 blocks in residential neighborhoods as well as in business districts.
- “Nodes” are van stops where van drivers understand that they collect commuters (subscribers) within a few minutes of driving, about 6-7 commuters per van, needing to sample only one or two nodes in the morning during rush hour.
- The key to the system is volume - enough subscribers generate enough vans and enough nodes whereby, statistically, one can feel confident that they will be picked up at “their node” or a neighboring node within 5-7 minutes and dropped off downtown in a time comparable to taking their car.
- Wireless/web-based technologies get the right commuter gets to the right van as quickly as possible.
- For example, a *SmarteVan* commuter would hold down the # key on their cell phone prior to leaving home. A signal is generated at a centralized server, understanding via a Web account that this commuter would be at a specific node—within perhaps 5-7 minutes.

2. Web-based Carpool System for Cities:

- Same idea as above with “Nodes” interspersed every 3-5 blocks in residential neighborhoods as well as in business districts.
- Participants join on the Web, communicate their commuting needs on the Web, with google-type maps showing their closest node for pickup and a node near their place of work for drop-off.
- Windows of time specified for when pickup and arrival are needed, e.g. within 5-7 minutes.
- Some type of security system in place for participants (initially a driver’s license would likely be needed at the time of pickup, but ultimately some type of magnetically-swiped card may be more appropriate.)
- Transportation network software—Web-based with ability to communicate by text messaging to cell phones helps design real-time carpooling solutions for users, both drivers and passengers.
- A “currency” is put into place whereby drivers get credit for rides given, as well as passenger-miles donated to others (similar to a taxi meter) and passengers give credit for their rides.
- An administrative fee is charged, likely a small percentage of the total commerce by the sponsoring company as part of the business plan.
- An exchange rate for this “transportation currency” is given and possibly revised from time to time so that one could actually collect money if they are generally giving more than receiving rides.
- This is similar to “Slugging” which is already in place in cities around the country, but it adds a layer of security and a very important layer of improving real-time and detailed info to match those who offer and those who need rides.