

Pay commuters to car-pool

By Jim Fox

People are sick and tired of gridlock traffic during commute hours. The pollution, lost time and tax money spent on freeway widening are horrendous. Marin talks of spending \$750 million on freeway widening with predictions of gridlock within five years of project completion.

Solo commuters are major contributors to this problem. Car-pooling is a simple solution.

I propose rewarding car-pool drivers for giving two poolers a ride to work. During the commute, pool drivers would receive \$5 at toll booths entering a city and an additional \$5 leaving, or \$200 a month, plus the chance to win million-dollar prizes.

Drivers deserve this money for the extra gas and effort needed to give two poolers a ride. Solo commuters would pay a \$5 toll entering and leaving the city during commute hours, a small price to pay considering the time they save during their total commute.

Vehicles with two people would not pay any toll. During non-commute hours, the \$5 toll would not exist. This \$5 toll would fund the system. If this

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worked, commute traffic into cities would decrease by about half.

A dollar from each toll collected would go into a progressive super jackpot. Randomly, jackpots worth \$100 or \$1,000 or even \$1 million would be awarded to poolers, to be split between the driver and riders.

Some may say, "I can't pool because it's not dependable" or "My hours are too irregular" or "My destination isn't popular" or "It's unsafe to pool with

strangers."

Car-pooling will be easy, safe and reliable. Since drivers are paid to pool and since they have the convenience and mobility of driving their own cars, riders will be in high demand and have no problem getting a ride to their destinations on time.

Riders would get chauffeured quickly, for free and in comfortable surroundings — unlike buses that cost money, take forever and force you to ride with strangers. Buses have weird schedules. You are unable to eat, drink a soda or smoke a cigarette.

A rider could go to a neighborhood "PoolStop" with his color-coded destination sign and almost instantly get a ride. This is an easy method for poolers to meet other poolers in their neighborhood areas with the same commute schedules. Women, if they preferred, would only pool with other women. For security, poolers would be issued computerized IDs that could be verified at PoolStop scanner stations. A computer would record who commuted together, which could be recalled in the event of a problem.

I am developing an "InstantRide" computerized telephone matching system. All that a potential pooler has to do is to dial the RideLine and use the telephone keypad to punch in his destina-

tion code. The potential pooler would then listen to messages from people offering or needing a ride.

By pressing a key on the telephone, the computer would dial the person who left the message, putting the two people instantly in contact. Since the computer dialed the phone, the privacy of the poolers is ensured. For anyone who's ever stuck, a ride is just a phone call away.

Car-pooling can work. With enough public support for a system such as this, the politicians could make it happen. It's a situation in which everyone wins.

People who don't commute into cities (the majority) would gain by less traffic, saving tax money on freeway construction, and by reducing air pollution.

Riders would get to commute for free. Drivers would get paid and the people who pay would save time.

If, for every solo commuter who pays a toll, a car pool of three is paid, the average number of people per vehicle would be two — almost twice the current average. Ideally, people would get to know their neighbors, become friendlier, work together and create a more social society.

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