

the Quarterly Commute

"Keeping you informed on a better way to get where you're going."

What's New (or Used) in Hybrids

It seems like every car manufacturer is getting in on the hybrid game these days, and hybrids are more widespread than ever on our roads in Central Virginia. Are you driving one of those hybrids yet? The first hybrid car, the Toyota Prius, was introduced in Japan in 1997. Honda introduced the Insight as the first hybrid car in the U.S. in 2000. The Honda Insight was eventually discontinued, but the Toyota Prius remains the highest-rated hybrid available; both according to reviews and the EPA estimated mileage.

There are tax advantages and gas-savings associated with hybrid cars, and more options are now available for families wanting something roomier than the Toyota Prius. Larger sedans and small SUV's from both Japanese and American car manufacturers are now on our roadways. Even notorious gas-guzzlers such as the Dodge Durango and Cadillac Escalade are coming out with hybrid versions for 2007 and 2008. Could one of these new hybrids be the right car for you? With hybrids or any other vehicles, if you are trying to get the most for your money in terms of pricing and fuel economy, it is best to start with some research rather than a trip to the dealership.

Hybridcenter.org, a project of the Union of Concerned Scientists, is a great resource for unbiased information on all hybrid vehicles. The website includes information that may help you decide which hybrid is right for you, as well as facts about state and federal incentives, tax credits and pollution. Is a full-size SUV a lot more fuel-efficient in a hybrid version? It should be more efficient than the non-

hybrid version of the same vehicle, but there may be extra costs associated with buying the first year a hybrid is introduced.

The Used Hybrid Market

Now that hybrids have been in the U.S. market for seven years, the market is larger than ever for used hybrid sales.



Bill Wanner, a regional planner for the TJ Planning District, commutes from Crozet to Charlottesville in his 2007 Toyota Prius Hybrid

The tax incentives associated with buying a new hybrid do not apply in the used hybrid car market, but the savings may be substantial. Whether buying a used hybrid from a dealership or an individual, it is important to do your homework as with any used car. Carfax reports can disclose some of the history of the vehicle, and it is always a good idea to get a used car inspection. With hybrids, there is also the question; will the battery need to be replaced soon? While this may not be of concern with regular cars, a hybrid battery can cost in the thousands of dollars. Check with the manufacturer on information for the model you are interested in to see how many miles the battery should last.

Combining Hybrids with Smart Driving Habits

Smart driving habits can lead to better fuel economy with any vehicle, but the payoff is even greater if you are driving a hybrid. Although hybrids are designed to be more efficient in stop and go traffic, avoiding quick stops and excessive acceleration can help you reach the great gas mileage you want to achieve. Maintaining your car is also important - regular tune-ups and properly inflated tires will help increase your gas mileage.

If you are driving a hybrid, you can take comfort in the fact that your vehicle is producing less emissions. However, as much progress as there has been in hybrid technology, it is not a true alternative to driving alone. In areas such as Northern Virginia, commuters have had to deal with increased traffic congestion from single occupant hybrids driving in HOV lanes. Combining your hybrid with alternative options such as carpooling, transit, and telework will go even further to reduce emissions, traffic congestion, and your trips to the gas station. Information on these options and more is available at www.rideshareinfo.org.

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P.O. Box 1505 · Charlottesville, VA 22902
434-295-6165 · 888-974-5500 · www.rideshareinfo.org

Top 10 Ways to Beat High Gas Prices

From Diane McEachern, author of *Beat High Gas Prices Now*

1. Drive smart. Avoid quick starts and stops, use cruise control on the highway, and don't idle.
2. Drive the speed limit. Remember that every 5 mph you drive above 60 mph is like paying an additional 10 cents per gallon for gas.
3. Drive less. Walk, bicycle, use a scooter or a moped, combine trips, and telecommute.
4. Drive a more fuel-efficient car. Consider one of the new hybrids; at the very least, choose from among the Environmental Protection Agency's "Fuel Economy Leaders" in the class vehicle you are considering.
5. Keep your engine tuned up. Improve gas mileage by an average of 4.1 percent by maintaining your vehicle in top condition.
6. Carpool. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, 32 million gallons of gasoline would be saved each day if every car carried just one more passenger on its daily commute.
7. Use mass transit and RideShare programs.
8. Keep tires properly inflated. Improve mileage by about 3.3 percent by keeping your tires inflated to the proper pressure. Replace worn tires with the same make and model as the originals.
9. Buy the cheapest gas you can find. Buy gas in the morning, from wholesale shopper's clubs, and using gasoline rebate cards. Track neighborhood prices on gasbuddy.com and gaspricewatch.com.
10. Support higher congressionally mandated standards and the development of alternative fuels.

Thanks for Taking the Clean Commute Pledge!

Clean Commute Day Winners Announced.

RideShare and the Commuter Information Team (CIT) are pleased to announce that Clean Commute Day 2007 was a success. Many area residents took the Clean Commute Pledge this year, promising to use an option other than driving alone for at least one day this spring. A total of 144 pledges were received from commuters living or working in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson. Participants were able to register in a drawing for valuable prizes.

The grand prize winner, Patricia Williams of Palmyra, won a family vacation package to Massanutten Resort in Elkton. Patricia carools 30 miles round trip each day to and from her office at the Charlottesville City Hall Annex. Other winners include Terri Payne, Reid Bailey, and Khadija Abdur-Rahman, all of Charlottesville, Mary Napoleon of Batesville, and Tonia Alexander, who carools from Afton to Charlottesville. RideShare and CIT were able to provide these additional prizes thanks to the generosity of our local sponsors - Ragged Mountain Running Shop, UVa Athletics and Whole Foods Market.

In addition to hosting a fun way to spread awareness about smart transportation options, the Commuter Information Team was able to learn a lot about how our region's commuters get to work. Over one-half of the pledges received were from commuters already using alternatives to driving alone. Participants pledged to "Clean Commute" in many ways, with carpooling as the most popular mode and walking as a close runner-up for City residents. Other modes included biking, using transit, vanpooling, telework, and using a combination of modes.

We hope that you enjoyed Clean Commute Day as much as we did. RideShare would love to hear your feedback if you participated, as well as your ideas for next year's event. If this



RideShare congratulates the grand prize winner. From left to right, Rhonda Edmunds (Program Manager), Patricia Williams (winner), and Lisa Horanyi (Outreach Coordinator)



Area commuters take the Clean Commute Pledge on the Downtown Mall

was the first time that you used an option other than driving alone, we would like to hear about your experience and share it with others. If you were one of our members already "Clean Commuting," we thank you for using alternative transportation and hope that you continue to be an example to your fellow commuters!

As a reminder, anyone that that uses an alternative to driving alone at least twice a week is eligible for RideShare's Guaranteed Ride Home program. Because leaving your car at home - even just a couple days a week - is so beneficial, RideShare will make it even easier by paying for your transportation if the unexpected happens while you're at work. For more information on Guaranteed Ride Home and other RideShare services, visit our website at www.rideshareinfo.org. •

511 Virginia



Share your story to help commuters across Virginia!

Are you saving money by carpooling? Do you stay fit by walking or biking to work? Is your car staying at home while you commute by transit? If any of these apply to you, 511 Virginia wants to share your story in an "Advice for the Road" testimonial to help travelers across the region.

511 Virginia is a statewide web and phone service that provides traffic and weather information on roads throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The service, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), was introduced in February 2005. 511 Virginia has the latest information on weather conditions, road construction and traffic incidents as well as lodging, food and gas. The system provides information on all of Virginia's interstates and most major primary roads. Traffic alerts and traveler

information also are available at www.511Virginia.org.

The next round of updates to the 511 Virginia website will provide options on transportation alternatives across the Commonwealth of Virginia, and VDOT needs your help! With the new web service, users will be able to plan their travel routes using options such as transit, carpooling, biking or walking. If you use an alternative to driving alone for your commute, VDOT wants to share your story to encourage others to do the same.

Commuters that would like to be featured on the new 511 Virginia website may apply by completing a survey at http://www.virginiadot.org/travel/advice_survey.asp. The questions in this survey will help VDOT choose profiles for the "Advice for the Road" section of the new 511 Virginia website. If you are chosen, a VDOT representative will be in contact to schedule a time to take your picture.

We hope you will choose to share your story to help 511 Virginia become a

511 Virginia Fast Facts:

- The 511 Virginia system received its one millionth call in December 2005.
- The system provides information on 98 roads in the state.
- 511 provides coverage on 2,027 miles of interstate roads, 1,322 miles of US Routes and 2,152 miles of Virginia Routes.

better resource for travel information. The incorporation of the new web features is ongoing as VDOT compiles commuter stories as well as information such as transit routes across the Commonwealth. In the meantime, users of the 511 phone system will see new enhancements beginning in August. If you have any comments and suggestions, VDOT welcomes your feedback at www.511virginia.org.

Carpooling Goes Primetime!



Carpoolers Coming this Fall to ABC.

"GAS IS EXPENSIVE"
"TRAFFIC IS A NIGHTMARE"
"THE ICECAPS ARE MELTING"

These are quotes from a few road signs that lead into the preview of *Carpoolers*, a new comedy coming to ABC this fall. The show, scheduled for Tuesdays at 8:30 PM, will follow the much talked about *Cavemen* sitcom, based on the popular characters from the GEICO commercials. Perhaps *Carpoolers* will provide a premise to which more can relate. Maybe it will help promote carpooling as a transportation option, although that does not appear to be the show's intention.

Here is the summary as released by ABC:

"Less about saving the environment than male bonding, four guys from very different backgrounds relish their daily commute as they commiserate about their lives, jobs and families in the carpool lane. There's Laird, the recently divorced playboy; Aubrey, the timid homemaker and breadwinner; the conservative and traditional Gracen; and eager newlywed Dougie. Together, between the pressures of home and work, these men find time to be themselves while driving to and from the office."

You may not be carpooling with someone named "Laird" or "Dougie,"

but there may be some similarities between this fictional group and your own carpool. RideShare members who carpool, especially those with long commutes, end up spending lots of time with each other. Many have found that networking and free advice are great side benefits to sharing the ride.

This will be an interesting show to check out this fall, especially if you are currently in a carpool. Visit abc.go.com/fallpreview/carpoolers for more information on the show, the cast and the producers. We don't know if this show will last, but it may provide a good topic of conversation for your carpool!

~ The Employer Corner ~

How to Empower and Retain Employees with Smart Transportation Options

Everyone likes options and the freedom to make choices. This applies at both home and at work. More options at work can empower employees, for example, choices in health insurance or even the option to wear jeans on Friday. Many employers are finding that providing transportation alternatives in the workplace can enhance their current benefits and help improve retention, while also improving traffic and parking conditions at the worksite.

Employees who use an alternative to driving alone have not had to deal with the stress of rush-hour traffic. They arrive in good spirits and ready to work. Additionally, they're putting most of their transportation costs back into their pockets. RideShare can help your organization promote options such as carpooling, vanpooling, transit, biking and walking. In addition, RideShare's services such as density mapping and carpool matching can help employees get started on a more cost-effective commute to work. Employers can even take

business tax deductions for underwriting vanpool or bus commuting expenses.

Options such as alternative scheduling and telework can boost employee satisfaction and productivity at the same time. These options are not actually a different form of transportation but can still help reduce the need for parking, while allowing more flexibility for employees. Depending on the size of your organization, these options may be implemented across departments or on an individual basis. RideShare can help you establish formal policies for alternative scheduling and telework arrangements.

There are many ways to implement transportation alternatives in the workplace that benefit employees as well as the bottom line. You can do as little, or as much as you wish to encourage employees to share the ride. Offering incentives such as preferential carpool parking, flexible work schedules or a RideShare link on your intranet are just a few ideas that have no cost. For more information, contact RideShare at 434-295-6165 or visit www.rideshareinfo.org.



RideShare is a program of the
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission.

RideShare is a member of the Commuter Information Team (CIT)*, a partnership that works to enhance the quality of life and mobility of people in the region.

**The CIT is RideShare, CTS, JAUNT, UTS, and Greene County Transit*



P.O. Box 1505
Charlottesville, VA 22902