



# COVID-19: RETURN TO WORK COMMUTE RESOURCE/SAFETY GUIDE

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*Portions of this guide are excerpted from the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) document, Supporting Commuters Returning to Worksites During Covid-19. We thank them for their generosity in sharing the information.*

We are providing you this resource for supporting and protecting the safety of your employees as they resume their commute to work. Prepared by Spectrumotion staff, and drawing from other leading Transportation Demand Management professionals, our **COVID-19 Return to Work Commute Resource/Safety Guide** provides recommended practices for managing different commute modes while continuing to support the health and safety of commuters during COVID-19.

As employees return to work, it is understandable that they may prefer commuting in a single occupant vehicle out of health concerns and to continue physical distancing. This guide is intended to provide employers and commuters with tips and recommendations that support public health precautions and physical distancing, while encouraging the use of carpooling, public transit, and vanpooling.

# INTRODUCTION

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The global pandemic brought on by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has had profound impacts on business operations. With public health authorities recommending physical distancing to reduce the spread of the virus, businesses across all sectors implemented emergency measures to protect their employees' health and adhere to local laws. For many businesses, this meant a complete closure of onsite operations and shifting employees from their worksites to their home, while a wide range of essential workers continued commuting.

As communities move forward with reopening their worksites, employees and employers will again need to address the challenge of commuting to and from work. While just 7% of US employers offered the option of telework prior to the pandemic, it is anticipated that many companies will continue to encourage some, if not all of their employees to work from home, at least part time, for the foreseeable future. However, many workers will need to return to their worksite, and there is a real possibility that personal health concerns could motivate commuters to drive alone, causing crippling congestion and wreaking havoc on air quality.

The following recommendations were developed to inform employers, commuters, and communities on how we can all get back to the workplace safely and efficiently. Prepared by a task force of transportation demand management (TDM) professionals representing service providers, employers, and government agencies, this handbook provides tips for managing many of the most common commute options during the current pandemic. TDM is the act of creating the most efficient multimodal transportation system that moves people with the goal of reducing congestion, improving air quality, and stimulating economic activity. TDM goals should be prioritized in the return to the workplace, balanced with concerns for personal health and welfare.

First and foremost, businesses should base all decisions on how and when to return to work on the guidance of local public health officials and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). It is anticipated that new recommendations will continue to be developed as lessons are learned, so we encourage you to keep up to date from those sources. Second, employers should continue to allow work-from-home eligible employees to do so. This will free up capacity within the transportation network and allow a safer and quicker commute for essential workers and others that are unable to work from home.

As your worksite and/or community begins to develop plans to return to the workplace, start by assessing the situation based on workplace geography, the specific needs of your commuters, the available infrastructure at your facilities (transit access, parking, bike racks, sidewalks, etc.), and if it is even necessary to return employees to the physical office or continue to allow them to work from home, so you can make the most appropriate decisions when reopening. These recommendations will present tips and guidance specific to each mode, but there are common suggestions for employers, service providers, and commuters—no matter the mode.

# PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY

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## **Stay Home If You Are Sick:**

If you are not feeling well, it's best to either take a sick day or work from home. Always follow the advice of your doctor or healthcare provider.

## **Maintain Physical Distancing:**

Keep 6 feet or 2 meters apart from others to slow the spread of germs when possible.

## **Follow Health and Safety Guidelines:**

Follow and communicate the World Health Organization (WHO), CDC, and local state and county guidelines to ensure safe commuting.

## **Protect Yourself & Others:**

Protective equipment should be provided to drivers, and all commuters should wear masks and/or face coverings.

## **Follow Cleaning Standards:**

All employers and service providers should share with the public and their customers their practices and procedures for safe cleaning of the workplace, common spaces, and vehicles (bus, train, shuttle, vanpool, carpool, etc.).

## **Communicate:**

Keep in touch with employers and employees. Inform them of what is happening, and how you can help them return to the workplace safely.

# SUPPORT EMPLOYEES BY PROVIDING

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## **Fringe Benefits:**

Implement or continue to provide qualified transportation fringe benefits to employees to reduce out of pocket expenses for public transit and vanpooling.

## **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Parking:**

Provide preferential parking for carpools and vanpools.

# SPECTRUMOTION SUPPORT

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## **Telecommuting Resources:**

We can provide you with all of the telecommuting resources you need to begin or continue with a telecommuting program at your worksite.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home:**

Spectrumotion provides a Guaranteed/Emergency Ride Home program to ensure employees who rideshare can get home in the event of an emergency or schedule change.

## **Commute Assistance:**

We can provide commute planning assistance to employees.

## **Rideshare Incentives:**

We offer rideshare incentive to encourage Irvine Spectrum Area commuters who currently drive alone to try ridesharing



# CARPOOL

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## Tips for Employers

### **Provide Ridematching**

Finding a carpool partner to share the ride is easy with apps like Waze Carpool. The Waze carpool group, Spectrumotion Carpoolers, helps individuals commuting to the Irvine Spectrum area find potential carpool partners.

### **Issue a Manager's Discussion Guide**

Understanding your employees' commuting concerns is key to unlocking employee sentiment on your organization's commuter plans. Set your

managers up for success to have conversations on commute preferences with their team members to spread the word on carpooling options.

### **Prioritize Carpool Parking**

Provide low or no-cost preferential parking that incentivizes the use of carpooling.

## Tips For Commuters

### **Protect Yourself and Others**

Wear face coverings while in the vehicle

### **Limit Carpool Size**

Limit carpools to no more than one person per row of seats to create as much physical distance as possible in the car.

### **Reduce Exposure**

Efforts should be made to ride with the same people each day and avoid “drop in” riders.

### **Limit Physical Contact**

Carpoolers should not have any physical contact with one another and should maintain appropriate physical distancing when entering and exiting the vehicle. Require passengers to sit diagonally from each other.





## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation has been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. While concerns may currently exist regarding health and safety, public transit will remain an essential mode for millions of people. Most public transit agencies have already adjusted their safety precautions and implemented physical distancing to protect both riders and operators. This has included restricting seating, requiring masks, and separating the entrance and exit of the vehicle, among other actions. Transitioning into the next phase will include additional efforts and engagement from public transit agencies, employers and riders.

# Tips For Employers

## **Communicate**

Make sure your transit agency and your commuter assistance program are aware of your reopening timelines and how many employees will be coming back to the workplace. This can help create transit plans to better serve your worksite as service is brought back to the community.

## **Share Informational Materials**

Many agencies have changing schedules or standards that are only being posted online. By putting up the flyers with where to find that information, you are helping your employees find the information they need.

## **Provide Feedback**

If your business is hearing about issues with getting to your worksite, let your transit agency know. Real-time feedback on how new schedules, routes, and traffic patterns are working will help ensure your employees a smooth commute.

## **Be Flexible and Understanding**

With reduced schedules and limited vehicle capacities, employees using public transit may need additional time to get to work.

# Tips for Commuters

## **Familiarize Yourself With the Schedule**

Visit your transit agency's website or contact customer service to determine if there are any changes to your route or schedule.

## **Follow Signs and Regulations**

Vehicles may have restricted seating to ensure physical distancing. Be sure to adhere to those guidelines.

## **Be Flexible and Patient**

Because of the requirements for social distancing, you may not be able to ride or board a bus. Be mindful of that when making your commute.



## TELECOMMUTE

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As state and local governments rolled out “stay at home” or “shelter in place” advisories, many organizations had to rapidly assess internal capacity for telework implementation with only a few days’ notice. As organizations look to re-open their worksites, many plan to continue allowing employees to work from home permanently or part-time to reduce onsite numbers to support physical distancing. Spectrumotion staff can assist you in creating a telework policy. We have the in-house expertise and documents you need to create your comprehensive, formal, telework policy.

# Tips for Employers

## **Keep It Going**

Continuing to allow employees to work from home is the single best action to reduce the risk of exposure and continue business operations.

## **Invest in Technology**

Support employees continuing to work from home with the tools and equipment that enable them to succeed, including collaboration software that fosters employee interaction.

## **Establish Formal Policies**

Developing clear telework policies for employees and managers is essential for all organizations to ensure long-term success. Policies should clarify which employees are eligible, set expectations for communications and accountability, and outline expectations regarding access and security.

## **Troubleshoot**

Identify problematic areas that can cripple work productivity in a telework environment and assemble a team to assist with resolution. Establishing guidelines for a troubleshooting process should be a focus when developing telework policies for an organization.

## **Focus on Results**

Managers should establish clear expectations for employees and encourage team collaboration.

# Tips for Employees

## **Communication**

Combat feelings of isolation by leveraging communication tools to connect with your manager and teammates. Use existing technologies to chat, email, and video conference often.

## **Schedules**

Establishing a consistent routine is key. Employees should maintain regular work periods. Share progress updates internally to increase productivity and complete work on time.

## **Stay Active**

When you travel to the workplace every day, you are likely walking from the train station or walking to lunch. Be sure to incorporate a home workout or walk around the block into your day.

## **Change Your Environment**

A change of environment within your home workspace can keep you energized and productive throughout the day. Move to a different desk or play music you might hear in your company lobby or in the elevator.

## **Plan, But Be Flexible**

If schools and businesses close and you are not alone in your house, plan to take shifts for childcare and adjust your work schedule as needed. Setting clear expectations for work and home will be important.



## VANPOOL

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Many employers look to vanpools as a cost-effective way to keep employees from driving alone, while still allowing physical distancing. While people are reacclimating to the idea of a shared commute, vanpooling allows for a more controlled environment since it's a smaller group of people riding together. In many cases, the groups are already familiar with each other as they have commuted with each other for many years. As many get back to the workplace, there are still many people that won't, which could leave empty seats in the vanpool, creating physical distancing. As employers begin to reopen, it's important to assist vanpool groups with the transition, as it can take multiple weeks with employers deciding on reopening dates and new guidelines for staffing. It will be important for commuters to do their part to maintain the vehicle's cleanliness and adhere to recommended health guidelines to protect all riders.

# Tips for Employers

## **Talk to Your Employees**

Understand the level of comfort of your employees to return to their vanpool and learn what could be done to raise the level of comfort they have returning to the workplace and commuting with others.

## **Create A/B Scheduling for Employees**

In order to create physical distancing, consider creating two different schedules for the vanpoolers in order to split the number of people per vehicle. Keep vanpool groups on the same shift when possible.

## **Provide Subsidies**

With employees coming back to worksites slowly, think about providing additional seat subsidies to help offset vanpool costs.

## **Be Flexible with Capacity**

Allow more relaxed guidance on regulations during this time to help the vanpoolers who are partial riding due to changing work schedules.

## **Communicate with Your Provider**

Your vanpool program is also looking for reopening information to make sure that any needs to clean a vehicle or change a vehicle are being met as your business needs it.



# Tips for Commuters

## **Protect Yourself and Others**

Wear protective equipment while in the van and around other passengers.

## **Keep Surfaces Clean**

Regularly clean surfaces inside the vehicle, including keys, steering wheel, center console, cup holders, gearshift, door handles and panels.

## **Follow Good Hygiene**

Wash hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as soon as possible after leaving the van.

# APPENDIX

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## Definitions

### **Carpooling**

Carpooling is an arrangement in which a small group of people, traditionally two or three, commute together by car. [1]

Organized carpooling is a solution limited to users of your organization and provides mobility behaviors information through technology, incentive and details to the administrator of the program.

### **Fringe Benefit**

An employment benefit (such as a pension or a paid holiday) granted by an employer that has a monetary value but does not affect basic wage rates. [2]

### **High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV)**

Federal law defines a "high occupancy vehicle" or "HOV" to mean a vehicle with no fewer than two persons. [3]

### **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing, also called "social distancing," means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To physical distancing it is recommended that people stay at least 6' apart from other people, do not gather in groups, and stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gathers. [4]

### **Teleworking/Telecommuting**

Is the activity of working at home, while communicating with your office by phone or email, or using the Internet. [5]

**Transportation Demand Management (TDM)** TDM is the act of creating a most efficient multimodal transportation system that moves people with the goal of reducing congestion, improving air quality, and stimulating economic activity. [6]

## **Vanpooling**

An arrangement by which a large group of people, usually 7 – 15, commute to work in a dedicated van. [7]

[1] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/carpooling>

[2] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fringe%20benefits>

[3] <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freewaymgmt/hovguidance/glossary.htm>

[4] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

[5] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/teleworking>

[6] <https://www.actweb.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=3473>

[7] <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vanpooling>

## **LOCAL RESOURCES**

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### **City of Irvine: COVID-19 Resources for Business and Residents**

<https://www.cityofirvine.org/covid-19-resources>

### **Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce Business Recovery and Reentry Resources**

<https://www.greaterirvinechamber.com/>

# RIDESHARE RESOURCES

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**ACT: Information and Resources to Promote Safe Commuting During COVID-19.** Updated May 21, 2020.

<https://www.actweb.org/covid-19>

**Commute with Enterprise COVID-19**

<https://www.enterprise.com/en/car-rental/on-call-for-all.html>

**Google Maps Adding Pandemic Critical Information for Commuters**

<https://support.google.com/maps/answer/9795160>

**Lyft COVID-19 Safety**

<https://www.lyft.com/safety/coronavirus>

**Metrolink Trains Safety and Security Measures.**

<https://metrolinktrains.com/rider-info/safety--security/cleaning/?epsremainingpath=cleaning>

**Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) COVID-19 Safety Guidelines and Operations Update**

<https://www.octa.net/Your-Safety-Is-Our-Priority/>

**Waze Carpool**

<https://medium.com/waze/working-together-to-help-communities-navigate-covid-19-af47062fb7ca>

# NATIONAL RESOURCES

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**CDC: Businesses and Workplaces**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

**EPA: List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2, Updated May 20, 2020.** <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

**OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19**

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

**WHO: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Advice for the Public. Updated April 29, 2020.** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>