



UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:

Next:
Wednesday, July 23, 2014

Future:
Thursday, August 21, 2014
Tuesday, September 23, 2014



QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

When do I need to submit a change in TIPS?

Any time the information on your application changes, you should submit a change in TIPS. The recertification period is a good time to confirm that your application is up to date.

JULY-AUGUST RECERTIFICATION PERIOD BEGINS

The third recertification period has begun. All transit benefit recipients are required to log into the Transportation Incentive Program System (TIPS) to recertify their transit benefit record between 1 July and 15 August 2014. For most participants this will be a piece of cake. Participants simply need to log into TIPS (<https://tips.navy.mil>), select recertify, affirm the recertification statements and submit. Their supervisor and reviewing official will not need to take any action as long as no changes are made to the record.

Vanpool participants will have one additional step during this recertification period. In May 2014, the Office of Financial Operations deployed the new vanpool manager module in TIPS. Vanpools are now required to be registered in TIPS and approved by a local reviewing official before participants are able to apply for transit benefits to participate with that vanpool. Once the vanpool coordinator has successfully registered his or her vanpool in TIPS, the vanpool will appear in the dropdown box of approved vanpools. Vanpool participants will be required to select the vanpool they belong to when they recertify their application. If your vanpool is not in the dropdown list when you attempt to recertify, please contact your vanpool coordinator or local reviewing official to confirm that the vanpool is registered correctly. Hundreds of vanpools have successfully registered in TIPS and are now available for participants to select. So don't delay, recertify today!

I CAN'T RECERTIFY. MY VANPOOL IS [FULL].



If your vanpool is in the drop down list but is tagged as [FULL], you will also need to reach out to your vanpool coordinator. TIPS will only allow you to select a vanpool that has an available seat. Some vanpools may be reported as [FULL] when they are not. This can occur if an error was made in the vanpool registration process.

One common error is that the vanpool coordinator may have listed the Department of the Navy (DON) participants as Non-DON riders in the vanpool registration. This section of the vanpool registration should be reserved only for those riders who are not affiliated with the DON like Army, Air Force, other DoD employees and contractors. To correct this issue and free up seats so the vanpool is once again available in the dropdown menu, the vanpool coordinator will need to log into TIPS and remove the DON participants from the non-DON rider section. Once complete, the [FULL] tag will be removed from the vanpool and the DON riders will be able to select their vanpool from the drop down list.

WHY IS MY CERTIFIED COMMUTING COST CHANGING?

Vanpool participants may see their certified commuting cost change when they recertify their transit benefit application. Vanpool participants are eligible to receive transit benefits to cover the cost of one seat in a vanpool not to exceed the maximum benefit. The November 2013 newsletter provided several tables to assist participants in calculating their certified commuting cost correctly based on the type of vanpool they ride. TIPS has automated this calculation process to make it easier for participants to certify the correct commuting cost. During the vanpool registration process, the vanpool coordinator provides pricing information and supporting financial documentation. This allows the system to calculate the certified commuting cost per seat for each vanpool that is properly registered. When a vanpool participant selects his or her vanpool from the dropdown list the per seat certified commuting cost will be automatically populated in the participant's application. This will allow them to certify the correct commuting cost. Some participants may have not correctly certified their commuting cost in their previous application or their vanpool costs may have changed since their last recertification, so participants may see that their certified commuting cost is updated when they select their vanpool.



Keep in mind that the certified commuting cost only represents the cost for one seat in the vanpool. Depending on how a van is organized, this may mean that participants will need to pay out-of-pocket for costs above the certified commuting cost. These cost are most commonly associated with leaving seats unoccupied in the van. Transit benefits cannot be used to pay for empty seats. These additional costs would need to be paid by the participants or the vanpool company.

If you have out-of-pocket costs, now may be the right time to reassess the vehicle type and ridership levels in your vanpool to help reduce some of the out-of-pocket expenses. For example, if two seven passenger vans traveling a similar route combine to form a fifteen passenger van, you will likely reduce the overall commuting expenses and avoid paying out-of-pocket. Optimizing your vanpool is also a good way to ensure that your van meets the occupancy requirements under the 80/50 rule. Vanpool participants can also take steps to increase their ridership levels by marketing the empty seats in their vanpool to prospective riders. This too will help reduce any out-of-pocket expenses.

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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