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ODOT and Transportation Partners Launch 'Drive Less Connect' New Online Tool Links People for Free

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), along with numerous transportation partners across the state, officially launched a new free online tool Wednesday (Nov. 2), called *Drive Less Connect* that can help match up people who want to use alternative transportation options. The goal is to reduce traffic congestion and to cut commute costs by matching up drivers with like-minded people going the same direction.

Drive Less Connect is an online tool that is part of Oregon's *Drive Less Save More* campaign, which encourages people to think before they drive, avoid trips when possible, and to change driving to reduce congestion and air quality issues. The campaign encourages Oregonians to use transportation options such as carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bicycling, walking and telecommuting.

"With gas prices hovering around \$4, people are looking for ways to drive less. We have continued to see an increased interest in carpooling and other transportation options to driving alone over the years," said Metro Councilor Rex Burkholder, who is actively involved in transportation issues across the Portland metro area. "We are excited to roll out this new free tool across the regional area that can save people money on the road through carpooling and vanpooling, tapping into transit and bike commuting. Already organizations such as the Oregon Health & Science University and Portland Community College are taking advantage of Drive Less Connect."

Burkholder added that a significant benefit to the new statewide Drive Less Connect tool is that it better serves individuals who commute outside of the cities in which they live such as Salem and Hood River.

The internet, new technology and social media websites have enabled individuals to connect on a variety of levels and interests. The Drive Less Connect tool allows people to register online and connect in real time with others who already use carpools or vanpools for work and play. The tool will even help people find biking partners.

"We are encouraging people to drive less and save more. By creating a climate of awareness through constant visibility and consistent messaging, individuals are reminded of the benefits of smarter driving strategies and then change their travel behavior," said Michael Ward, Administrator of ODOT's Public Transit Division.

ODOT is leading the state's approach to consolidate the local efforts and help maximize efficiency and broaden the program's reach. Regional partners include: ODOT, Metro (Portland area), Cherriots Rideshare (Salem-Keizer), Cascades West (Corvallis/Benton-Linn Counties), point2point Solutions (Eugene-Springfield), Rouge Valley Transportation District (Medford-Ashland), and Commute Options (Central Oregon, plus The Dalles and Klamath Falls).

"Through Drive Less Connect, we are able to expand statewide what many local communities had already been offering, a means of matching people interested in carpooling. Now, we can provide a more universal approach and better address regional travel," Ward said.

Individuals interested in finding out more about ridesharing, or wanting to register should visit the DriveLessConnect.com website.

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