

**An Assessment of the Demand for a Vanpool Program
Serving Agricultural Workers in Napa County**

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Executive Summary

The lack of safe, reliable and affordable transportation for agricultural workers is a significant issue with negative impacts for the health and well-being of California's agricultural sector. It has affected the productivity of growers and vintners, the well-being of agricultural workers and accompanying family members, the quality of life in local towns and communities. It has resulted in reduced productivity for the farming sector, unsafe conditions for motorists and pedestrians, traffic congestion, increased greenhouse gas emissions and exploitative conditions for agricultural workers in many cases.

Nonetheless, a promising approach to improving agricultural worker transportation is the implementation of farmworker vanpool programs, which have been successfully operating in California since 2002 and are currently being adopted by a growing number of forward-thinking counties. With Caltrans funding of \$20 million, these vanpool systems offer numerous benefits to agricultural counties, with virtually no cost to agricultural employers or local jurisdictions.

The Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency (NCTPA) contracted with the California Institute for Rural Studies to assess the feasibility of implementing a vanpool serving farmworkers in Napa County. Research methods included a survey of over 400 agricultural workers, a focus group with 15 agricultural workers in the city Napa, interviews with numerous agricultural employers, farmworker advocates and others familiar with issues affecting farmworker transportation in Napa County and a review of information from the Agricultural Industries Transportation Service (AITS) program, which has been successfully implementing this model since 2002.

The assessment findings indicate the feasibility of implementing this model in Napa County, based on the following considerations:

- The majority of agricultural employers interviewed as part of this assessment support the idea of a farmworker vanpool and several have agreed to participate in a pilot project on their vineyards.
- Findings from a 2008 survey that the Napa Valley Vintners Association conducted with its membership indicate that 84% of respondents would definitely (49%) or possibly (35%) offer rideshare programs if they were easy and available, while 83% of employers would offer or consider offering flexible scheduling to allow employees to participate in rideshare programs.
- 68.2% of agricultural workers in Napa County would like to participate in a vanpool program, while an additional 18.8% would consider participation.
- 19.8% of respondents would potentially be eligible to serve as vanpool drivers, based on possession of a valid U.S. driver's license and interest (11.1%) or potential interest (8.7%) in doing so.
- The survey respondents reported mean round-trip daily transportation costs of \$9.01, with a median of \$8.00 per day. With projected round-trip fares of \$5 per day, the vanpool would represent a cost-effective alternative for many farmworkers.

A vanpool program would also reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, thereby contributing to Napa County's efforts to comply with AB32. Implementation of a pilot vanpool

program with 30 vans would reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Napa County by an estimated 722,234 pounds, representing a reduction of 0.34% of CO₂ equivalent greenhouse gas emissions. Expanding this program to all interested farmworkers in Napa County would result in an estimated 4.4% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Introduction: The Need for Improved Transportation for Agricultural Workers in California

The lack of safe, reliable and affordable transportation for agricultural workers is a significant issue with negative impacts for the health and well-being of California's agricultural sector. It has affected productivity, the well-being of agricultural workers and accompanying family members, the quality of life in local towns and communities. It has resulted in reduced productivity for the winegrape sector, unsafe conditions for motorists and pedestrians, traffic congestion, increased greenhouse gas emissions and exploitative conditions for agricultural workers in many cases. Specific impacts of this situation as it affects the different sectors in Napa County are discussed in detail below.

Issues Affecting Agricultural Workers

The lack of safe, reliable and affordable transportation has negatively affected agricultural workers in a number of ways, including the following:

- Many agricultural workers are undocumented and do not possess a valid U.S. driver's license. That has had a number of negative ramifications, including an inability to drive at all, driving without a license, driving with limited knowledge of U.S. traffic laws, and loss of vehicles, which may be impounded if unlicensed drivers are stopped by the police.
- Individuals without their own vehicle must seek rides with co-workers or "*raiteros*" (individuals providing rides for a fee), who often charge exorbitantly high rates. Of particular concern is the fact that many foremen and farm labor contractors function as de facto "*raiteros*," with numerous reports of farmworkers being coerced to pay for rides as a condition of employment. Further, *raiteros* are often unlicensed, their vehicles uninsured and not in compliance with farm labor vehicle codes, and there have been numerous reports of *raiteros* driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs – an unsafe situation for agricultural workers, other drivers and pedestrians.
- Unsafe vehicles, lack of driver's licenses, limited driver training and limited knowledge of traffic laws have resulted in numerous accidents and injuries among agricultural workers, including many fatalities. There were a total of 588 collisions involving farm labor vehicles in California during the ten year period 1998-2008, of which 45 were fatal. These incidents resulted in 91 fatalities and 1,239 injuries.¹
- Due to low incomes, many farmworkers purchase older cars, which often lack insurance and may be poorly maintained. Older cars typically emit higher levels of emissions and are more likely to break down, resulting in lost income – and in many cases lost jobs – for farmworkers, and lost productivity for employers. Poorly maintained cars may also be more likely to be involved in accidents.
- Farmworker incomes have been affected by rising gasoline prices and increased transportation costs.

¹ Source: California Highway Patrol, Information Services Unit, customized data report.

Issues Affecting the Agricultural Industry

The current situation has had numerous negative impacts on growers, other agricultural employers and Napa County's agricultural sector in general. Key impacts include the following:

- The lack of reliable transportation among agricultural workers has limited employee ability to get to work in a consistent and reliable manner, with negative impacts on firm productivity and income.²
- Growers can be held liable for damages associated with traffic accidents occurring on the way to or from work, even if those incidents occur off the farm, which can result in considerable expense.
- An estimated 3-5% of growers in Napa County currently provide transportation for their employees at considerable expense.

Issues Affecting Napa County

Poor farmworker transportation has negatively impacted Napa County and its residents as well.

- Traffic congestion has become an increasingly challenging problem in Napa County. Traffic counts indicate that an estimated 2,000 vehicles traverse Highway 29 at peak hours to access agricultural employment worksites.
- Accidents and injuries associated with agricultural workers affect all drivers and pedestrians in Napa County.
- More cars on the road results in reduced air quality, with negative impacts on Napa County's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with AB32 and SB375.

A Successful Model: A Vanpool System Serving Agricultural Workers

A promising approach to improving agricultural worker transportation is the implementation of farmworker vanpool programs, which have been successfully operating in California since 2002 and are currently being adopted by a growing number of forward-thinking counties. With Caltrans funding of \$20 million, the vanpool systems will offer numerous benefits to agricultural counties, with virtually no cost to agricultural employers or local jurisdictions. Financial support comes from funds earmarked for this purpose only. As such, this initiative does not detract from other programs or services.³

Farmworker vanpools are currently being implemented in numerous agricultural regions throughout California: Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Monterey and San Luis Obispo. Napa County has applied for and been awarded \$572,250 in funding to implement this effort as well.

² Employers in some regions have in fact given hiring preference to employees participating in vanpool programs, since they are considered more reliable. In those instances, employees participating in vanpools have been hired first laid off last each season.

³ To the contrary, if Napa County does not take advantage of these funds, they will be used to fund vanpool programs in other counties.

How the Vanpool Program Works

Each County has the flexibility to implement the farmworker vanpool program based on its own needs. The Agricultural Industries Transportation Service (AITS) program has been successfully implementing this model since 2002. Key elements of this model as it is implemented by AITS include the following:

Organizing the Vanpool and Driving the Van

- Vanpool drivers must have a Class C California driver's license, provide DMV proof of a clean driving record and pass a Class B physical exam.
- A volunteer driver is responsible for organizing a vanpool, which generally consists of 11 to 15 passengers who typically work in the same location.
- The driver and passengers set their own route and schedule. If they are all in agreement, they may stop to run errands.⁴
- Drivers are not paid, but receive free transportation in exchange for driving.

Eligibility

- Participation in the vanpool is open to all agricultural workers. Discussions with Caltrans representatives indicate that the definition of agricultural workers is broad, and encompasses field workers, production workers such as cellar and bottling workers, and possibly other winery employees.
- The program could potentially be expanded to include workers in other industries, including city and county employees, as well as employees of hospitals, resorts, hotels and restaurants. For example, the Kings County vanpool program has been successfully serving correctional institute staff.

Funding

- Initial funding for the vanpool is provided through a grant from Caltrans. The vanpool program is expected to become self-sustaining over time.
- Data from the AITS program indicate that this program has strong potential to be financially self-sustaining. The AITS program, now in its 7th year, is completely self-sufficient.

Cost to Employers and the Public Sector

- The vanpool program does not cost employers anything in terms of monetary costs or staff time associated with administration or paperwork. In fact, employers are encouraged to have as little to do with this program as possible, in order to reduce real or perceived employer influence over the program. Subsequently, no one responsible for hiring or firing employees, e.g., foremen, is allowed to serve as a vanpool driver.
- Because this program is funded by Caltrans there are no costs to the public sector.

⁴ This is an important benefit for individuals without their own vehicles, who can pay as much as \$20 for rides to the supermarket.

Cost to Passengers

- Current vanpool fares in other regions are approximately \$5 per day, depending on distances traveled.
- Fares are typically comparable to or less than what passengers in private vehicles pay.
- All fares are clearly posted to increase transparency and minimize the likelihood of abuse.

Safety

- Findings from existing farmworker vanpool programs indicate extremely high levels of safety. The AITS program has reported only one at-fault accident in 4.8 million miles traveled. This compares favorably with the equivalent rate of 2.4 accidents per 4.8 million miles traveled for California in general during the ten year period 1997-2006.⁵
- Drivers receive additional safety training and all vans are equipped with a Global Positioning System, so driver can locate help should an emergency arise and so vans can be tracked by the agency at any given time.
- The vans also carry first aid kits, fire extinguishers and roadside safety items.
- Each van in the AITS program is fully covered by a \$2 million insurance policy.
- Each van receives regularly scheduled maintenance provided by the agency responsible for managing the vanpool program in each region.
- The vans are also equipped with heat and air conditioning, making them more comfortable and safer.
- The vans are equipped with drinking water and can be used to shade workers on hot days. These are benefits for workers and employers concerned with worker safety and compliance with regulations.

Assessment Findings: Demand for an Agricultural Worker Vanpool in Napa County

The demand for a vanpool serving agricultural workers in Napa County was assessed via a survey of 409 agricultural workers living and working throughout the County,⁶ a focus group with 15 agricultural workers at Magnolia Park in Napa, discussions with approximately 40 agricultural employers, farmworker advocates and others familiar with issues affecting farmworker transportation in Napa County and a review of information from the Agricultural Industries Transportation Service (AITS) program, which has been successfully implementing this model since 2002.. The assessment process was overseen by an Advisory Committee.

⁵ Analysis based on data from California Highway Patrol. Ten Year Summary, 1997-2006.
<http://www.chp.ca.gov/switrs>.

⁶ A brief survey was administered to farmworkers working at 55 different farms/employers throughout Napa County. The survey was distributed by staff and was filled out directly by farmworkers, with assistance from staff when necessary. Because the methodology was not based on a random sample of agricultural workers, caution should be used in extrapolating from these findings to the general population of agricultural workers in Napa County.

Industry Demand for a Farmworker Vanpool Program

Discussions with employers and other representatives of the agricultural industry regarding the proposed vanpool program have been consistently positive. There is a genuine desire for a green transportation system in Napa County, particularly one that could serve all types of agricultural workers. Interview respondents recognized that vanpooling provides efficient, reliable, safe and affordable transportation for workers. At the same time, they recognized that vanpooling could take hundreds of cars off the road, reducing traffic congestion and vehicle miles traveled, ultimately reducing the industry's carbon footprint. Vanpooling is also recognized as consistent with the sustainable farming and winemaking practices of Napa, while improving highway safety and traffic congestion along the primary corridors running parallel through and across the Valley.

A vanpool program could potentially benefit employers hiring workers through the H-2A program, since H-2A regulations require employers to provide these employees with transportation to and from work.⁷ Employers with H-2A workers could potentially provide participating employees with vouchers to cover the cost of vanpool fares, essentially making this a free transportation option for workers.

The Napa Valley Vintners Association conducted a survey of wineries in 2008 to assess interest in employee rideshare programs such as carpools or vanpools. Ninety-four members participated in this survey. The majority of respondents (72%) felt that traffic congestion was a very or somewhat significant issue with respect to getting to and from work. While only 3% of wineries currently offer rideshare programs, fully 84% of respondents would definitely (49%) or possibly (35%) offer rideshare programs if they were easy and available. At the same time, 83% of employers would offer or consider offering flexible scheduling to allow employees to participate in such programs.

Napa County has a long and strong history of networking and coalition-building to solve critical problems affecting the County and the wine industry in particular. Several growers and vineyard management companies have already agreed to participate in a pilot vanpool program, while numerous organizations have provided letters of support for a funding proposal which has successfully raised \$572,250 for this program. Support for this program has come from individual growers and vineyard management companies, including the Napa County Farm Bureau, the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner, the California Human Development Corporation, the St. Helena Multicultural Committee, Napa Valley Community Housing and the Napa County Housing Authority.

Farmworker Demand for a Vanpool Program

The survey data and focus group findings indicate that an agricultural worker vanpool system has strong potential for success in Napa County. Key survey findings include the following:

⁷ H-2A Final Rule, Section 655.104 (h) (3). "Transportation between living quarters and worksite The employer must provide transportation between the workers living quarters (i.e., housing provided or secured by the employer pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section) and the employers worksite at no cost to the worker, and such transportation must comply with all applicable Federal, State or local laws and regulations, and must provide, at a minimum, the same vehicle safety standards, driver licensure, and vehicle insurance as required under 29 U.S.C.1841 and 29 CFR part 500, subpart D."

Mode of Transportation

Approximately half (51%) of survey respondents drive their own car to work, while 34% get rides with friends or family, 16% report rides with *raiteros* and 3% travel in employer-provided vehicles.

Table 1: Mode of Transportation

Mode of Transportation	%	N
Own car	50.9%	208
Ride with friend or family member	33.5%	137
Ride with a <i>raitero</i>	15.9%	65
Employer-provided vehicle	3.4%	14

Transportation Costs

The survey respondents reported mean round-trip daily transportation costs of \$9.01, with a median of \$8.00 per day.⁸ Respondents living in Napa County reported mean round trip transportation costs of \$7.54 per day, while individuals commuting from out-of-county reported significantly higher costs of between \$11.75 and \$16.67 per day. These costs indicate potential demand for a vanpool among farmworkers commuting from outside of Napa County.

Table 2: Transportation Costs by Place of Residence

County	Mean Round Trip Transportation Costs	Number of Responses
Napa	\$ 7.54	276
Lake	\$ 15.00	13
Solano	\$ 11.75	40
Sonoma	\$ 14.41	22
Sutter	\$ 12.15	20
Sacramento	\$ 16.67	3
Yolo	\$ 15.00	1

Interest in Participating in a Vanpool as a Passenger

As seen in

⁸ Transportation costs may not be entirely accurate. The survey requested information on daily transportation costs, however a number of respondents appear to have provided weekly costs instead. Despite efforts to correct for that, there were a number of ambiguous responses that may have skewed the results.

Table 3, approximately two-thirds (68%) of respondents expressed an interest in participating in a vanpool program as passengers, while 13% are not interested and 19% are unsure.

Table 3: Interest in Riding in a Vanpool as a Passenger

Interested in riding the vanpool as a passenger	N	Percent
Yes	272	68.2%
No	52	13.0%
Don't Know	75	18.8%
Total	399	100%

Higher transportation costs are associated with greater interest in the vanpool. Respondents expressing an interest in the vanpool reported mean transportation costs of \$9.43 per day, while those not interested reported mean costs of \$7.89 per day. Given associations between transportation costs and interest in the vanpool, it is not surprising to see higher interest in this program among respondents from Lake, Solano and Sonoma counties than those residing in Napa County (Table 4).

Table 4: Interest in Riding in a Vanpool as a Passenger by County of Residence

County of Residence	Interested		Not Interested		Not Sure	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Napa	63.7	(186)	15.4	(45)	20.9	(61)
Lake	92.9	(13)	7.1	(1)	0.0	(0)
Solano	92.3	(36)	2.6	(1)	5.1	(2)
Sonoma	90.9	(20)	4.6	(1)	4.6	(1)
Sutter	52.4	(11)	0.00	(0)	47.6	(10)
Sacramento	33.3	(1)	66.7	(2)	0.0	(0)
Yolo	100.0	(1)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)
Total	68.4	(268)	12.8	(50)	18.9	(74)

Respondents riding with *rateros* expressed higher interest in the vanpool as well. As seen in Table 5, 75% of respondents riding with *rateros* expressed an interest in the vanpool, compared with 70% of those riding with friends/family and 65% of individuals driving their own car.

Table 5: Interest in Riding in a Vanpool by Current Mode of Transportation

Interest in the Vanpool	Own car		Friend/family		Raitero	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Yes	64.7	(132)	70.4	(88)	74.6	(47)
No	16.7	(34)	10.4	(13)	4.8	(3)
Don't know	18.6	(38)	19.2	(24)	20.6	(13)
Total	100.0	(204)	100.0	(125)	100.0	(63)

Interest in Riding the Vanpool as a Driver

The survey respondents were less interested in participating in the vanpool as a driver. Only 20% of respondents are interested in being drivers, while 57% are uninterested and 23% are unsure (Table 6).

The survey did not specify that drivers are entitled to free transportation, a fact that may have resulted in higher rates of reported interest in being a driver. Nonetheless, focus group findings revealed a similar pattern, with low rates of interest in being a driver, despite an understanding that doing so would entail free transportation. The focus group participants' principal concerns with being a driver had to do with starting their day earlier and ending it later, which outweighed the benefits of free transportation.

Table 6: Interest in Riding in a Vanpool as a Driver

Interested in riding the vanpool as a driver	N	Percent
Yes	80	20.3%
No	225	57.0%
Don't know	90	22.8%
Total	395	100%

Eligibility for Driving a Van

One-third (31%) of all respondents reported possession of a valid U.S. driver's license, a requirement for driving a van.⁹ However, half (54%) of respondents interested in being a vanpool driver reported possession of a valid U.S. driver's license. Overall, 11.1% of all respondents are interested in driving a van *and* possess a valid U.S. driver's license, while an additional 8.7% have a valid license but are unsure if they are interested in driving a vanpool. An estimated 19.8% of farmworkers working in Napa County may therefore be interested in *and* eligible to drive a van.¹⁰

Table 7: Interest in and Eligibility for Driving a Van

Interest and Eligibility in Driving a Van	N	Percent
Possess a valid U.S. driver's license	119	31.4%
Possess a valid U.S. driver's license and interested in driving a van	42	11.1%
Possess a valid U.S. driver's license and unsure if interested in driving a van	33	8.7%

⁹ Of note is the fact that virtually half (49.7%) of those driving their own car to work do not possess a valid U.S. driver's license, creating a potentially unsafe situation for drivers, passengers and others on the road.

¹⁰ Additional factors affecting eligibility to be a driver, including driving record, physical health, etc. would likely make the final percentage of eligible drivers somewhat lower.

Type of Employer

Half (50.4%) of the respondents are employed directly by growers while 28.6% are employed by vineyard management companies and/or farm labor contractors.¹¹ Direct employment by growers may indicate more stability with respect to location of employment and working with the same set of co-workers, which may in turn indicate higher feasibility of the vanpool system in those settings. Nonetheless, team stability is ultimately more important than the location of employment, since it is preferable for all passengers to work in the same location and live near one another. Since many farmworkers employed by vineyard management companies and farm labor contractors work in stable teams, this system may be well-suited for them as well.

Table 8: Type of Employer

Type of Employer	N	Percent
Grower	206	50.4%
Vineyard management company or farm labor contractor	117	28.6%
Not specified	86	21.0%
Total	409	100%

Length of Employment

More employment during the year indicates a higher feasibility of the proposed vanpool system. As seen in

¹¹ Data on type of employer was not available for the remaining 21% of respondents.

Table 9, over half of farmworkers are employed in Napa County for ten or more months of the year, while 79.9% are employed for seven or more months out of the year. Other research conducted by the California Institute for Rural Studies¹² indicates that 55% of agricultural workers, representing 3,744 individuals, are employed in Napa County for seven or more months out of the year.

The survey respondents reported a mean of 8.9 months of employment throughout the year, with a median of 10 months. Respondents employed directly by growers report an average of 9.2 months of employment during the year, compared with 8.2 months for those working for vineyard management companies or farm labor contractors. While this difference is relatively small, a focus on recruiting workers employed directly by growers could result in an additional month of revenue for the vanpool program.

¹² Strohlic et al (2007). "An Assessment of the Demand for Farm Worker Housing in Napa County." Davis, CA: California Institute for Rural Studies.

Table 9: Length of Employment in Napa County

Months Employed in Napa County	Number of Responses	Percent	Cumulative Percent
10 to 12	208	56.7	56.7
7 to 9	85	23.2	79.9
4 to 6	51	13.9	93.7
0 to 3	23	6.3	100.0
Total	367	100.0	

Place of Residence

Approximately three-fourths (74.1%) of survey respondents reported residence in Napa County, while 25% commute from out-of-county, principally Solano, Sonoma and Sutter Counties. The majority of respondents residing in Napa County live in the City of Napa (65%) and St. Helena (18%).

Table 10: County of Residence

County	N	Percent
Napa	298	72.9%
Solano	40	9.8%
Sonoma	23	5.6%
Sutter	22	5.4%
Lake	15	3.7%
Sacramento	3	0.7%
Yolo	1	0.2%
Missing	7	1.7%
Total	409	100.0%

Respondent Comments

Ninety-seven of the 409 survey respondents provided written comments regarding the idea of a farmworker vanpool.¹³ Virtually all comments were favorable and supported the vanpool, with two exceptions, which supported the idea in general but expressed skepticism regarding its feasibility. Respondents cited a number of issues as reasons for supporting this effort, including the high cost of gas, safety, not having a car and not having a driver's license. Numerous farmworkers commented that they hope the vanpool becomes a reality very soon.

Respondents getting rides with *rateros* were significantly more likely to provide comments in support of the vanpool than those driving their own car or getting rides with friends or family. Two in five (40.6%) respondents riding with *rateros* provided comments supporting this idea and expressing hope that the vanpool would become a reality, compared with 26% of those

¹³ The fact that so many respondents took the time to provide comments is in and of itself a strong indication of interest in this effort, since it is rare for such large numbers of respondents to provide open-ended comments.

driving their own cars and 19.4% of those getting rides with friends and family. These findings suggest that farmworkers currently getting rides with *raiteros* should be considered for priority should a vanpool system be implemented, all other factors being equal, particularly the ability to organize sufficient passengers and sufficient length of employment in Napa County throughout the year.

Exhibit 11: Provision of Comments by Mode of Transportation

Current Mode of Transportation	Provided Comments
<i>Raitero</i>	40.6%
Own car	26.0%
Family/friends	19.4%

The following is a representative sample of respondent comments:

- This is a good idea, because many people don't have vehicles.
- This is a good idea because we spend a lot on gasoline.
- This is a good program. It would reduce accidents and because of the price of gasoline.
- I hope this happens. It would be a big help for us and good for the environment.
- I think this vanpool system would be perfect for my workplace, but I think the problem would be the volunteer drivers.
- I like this idea because of the high cost of gas, the safety of not driving and not worrying about losing my job for lack of a ride.
- This would avoid accidents and cars being taken away by the police. It would help us all.
- This is a good idea but a difficult one, because we don't all work in the same place. I work in Calistoga and others work in Napa and we start work at the same time – it would be almost impossible.
- This is a very necessary service in Napa. I know a lot of people who don't have cars.
- I would like to ride as a passenger in this van because it would reduce traffic and save gas.
- This is one of the best proposals that's ever been made in California.
- This is a good idea, I hope it happens soon.

Farmworker Focus Group Findings

A focus group discussion was conducted with 15 agricultural workers residing at Magnolia Park Homes in the City of Napa. The focus group participants included 14 men and one woman, ranging in age from 23 to 54 years. The focus group began with the screening of a brief Spanish-language video describing the AITS program in the Central Valley and an explanation that Napa County was considering implementing a similar program. A discussion following the video gauged general farmworker perceptions of the program, their levels of interest, specifics regarding fares, pick-up points, etc. and recommendations for implementing this program.

The focus group participants were very positive about the vanpool program in general. Eight expressed interest in participating in this program as passengers, while four were unsure (and none were opposed). All focus group participants reported possessing their own vehicles, such

that this was not a deterrent to interest in the program. The focus group participants reported that they usually work in crews of 10-12 people, which generally travel together from one vineyard to the next. In that sense, the vanpool system would work well for them.

The focus group participants did not feel it would be a problem getting passengers for the vanpool. However, they felt it would be more difficult to recruit drivers. Only one participant was in fact interested in participating in this program as a driver, while five were not interested and six were unsure. The preference for riding as passengers existed despite their knowledge that drivers ride for free. Stated reasons for not wanting to drive had to do with a general preference for being a passenger, not wanting to have to start their day earlier and end it later and a dislike of driving on Napa County's curvy roads. Several respondents noted that they could not participate because they need their cars to travel to different fields during the course of the day, while others commented that farmworkers with driver's licenses often have other responsibilities, which may make them unavailable to be drivers.

The focus group participants provided specific recommendations for implementing a vanpool program, including the following:

- A flat fee of \$30.00 per week, with no limitation on mileage.
- A preference for a central pick-up point, rather than door-to-door pick-up.
- A recommendation that the vans be equipped with four wheel drive, since there is a lot of driving in hilly areas and on dirt roads.

Impacts on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Napa County

With an estimated 11 passengers per van, the vanpool program is expected to take approximately three cars off the road for each van in operation.¹⁴ The implementation of a pilot program with 30 vans would therefore take an estimated 60 vehicles off the road.¹⁵ According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator,¹⁶ removing 60 cars from the road represents a reduction of 722,234 pounds of CO₂ equivalent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions each year. That represents an estimated 0.34% reduction in GHG emissions for Napa County, based on an estimated 210,964,760 lbs. of CO₂ equivalent emissions per year.¹⁷

Based on extrapolations from data from a California Institute for Rural Studies study of agricultural worker housing in Napa County,¹⁸ replacing all farmworker vehicles with vans would result in removing approximately 887 vehicles from the road. That in turn represents a reduction of approximately 10,679,927 pounds of CO₂ equivalent greenhouse gas emissions, or 5.1% of all GHG emissions in Napa County. Since 87% of survey respondents expressed actual (68.2%) or potential (18.8%) interest in participating in this program, implementation of a

¹⁴ Based on an estimated 3.6 passengers per vehicle.

¹⁵ Based on 90 cars removed and 30 vans added (90-30=60).

¹⁶ <http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html>.

¹⁷ <http://www.communitypulse.org/napa/co2-emissions>. Figures are based on emissions from energy use (electricity & natural gas) and local transportation only. This figure does not however include air travel, transport of non-local food and goods, and emissions from agricultural operations, landfills, etc.

¹⁸ Strohlic et al (2007), op cit.

vanpool program on a large scale could reduce GHG emissions in Napa County by an estimated 4.4%, which would make a significant contribution to Napa County's efforts to reduce GHG emissions and ability to comply with AB32. Expansion of this program to other sectors, such as wineries and the hospitality sector would result in further contributions to reducing GHG emissions in Napa County.

Potential Risks and Challenges

There are several factors that could adversely affect the success of this endeavor. Key factors and considerations regarding the implementation of this effort are discussed below.

The most important factor determining the success of this effort is demand. Because the vanpool program must be financially self-sufficient by June 2011, the principal factor affecting its success is sufficient demand, or ridership, expanding the service to meet the transportation needs of broader populations of workers. The AITS experience has shown that this program can be financially feasible with 11 passengers per van. However, the AITS experience has also shown that there is a ramp-up period before there are sufficient passengers to make this effort self-sustaining. An effective marketing campaign targeting agricultural workers and cooperation on the part of the agricultural industry will be essential in getting the word out and creating sufficient demand during a relatively short timeframe.

Demand is also a function of the ability to form vanpools consisting of sufficient riders working at the same location.¹⁹ The assessment findings indicate that most farmworkers in Napa County work in teams of 10 to 20 individuals and are employed for nine to ten months of the year, which point to the feasibility of this model in Napa County.

The most challenging factor affecting the feasibility of this effort may be the ability to attract enough individuals that are willing and eligible to serve as drivers. The assessment findings indicate that an estimated 20% of agricultural workers are potentially interested in driving a van and eligible to do so, which points to the feasibility of this effort.

Conclusions

The implementation of a vanpool program serving agricultural workers is an important opportunity for Napa County to continue playing a strong leadership role with respect to the provision of good conditions for agricultural workers, arguably the backbone of Napa County's \$9.5 billion dollar wine industry.

The assessment findings indicate high demand for a vanpool program among growers and other agricultural industry representatives, agricultural workers and other stakeholders familiar with transportation in Napa County. The majority of workers surveyed expressed a clear preference for riding in a safe vehicle at an affordable fare. As a survey respondent explained, "This would avoid accidents and cars being taken away by the police. It would help us all."

¹⁹ While this is not a necessity and it is possible for vans to drop people off at different fields, the numerous logistical, time and safety factors associated with doing so do not make it a very feasible option.

The assessment findings point to the feasibility of the proposed vanpool, based on factors including the number of potential passengers, length of employment in Napa County and the number of potential drivers. The survey findings indicate that 68% of respondents are interested in riding the vanpool program as passengers. Based on an estimated 3,744 agricultural workers employed in Napa County for seven or months out of the year,²⁰ these figures indicate that there are 2,545 potential passengers – enough to fill 169 vans with 15 passengers each. When winery and other non-field workers are included as potential passengers, these numbers increase dramatically. Similarly, between 10% and 20% of agricultural workers, representing between 370 and 720 individuals employed in Napa County for seven or more months of the year, would be interested and eligible to serve as drivers. These figures represent a large enough pool of potential drivers to make this effort feasible as well. Finally, at current projected fares of \$5 per day, the cost of riding the vanpool would be significantly lower than what most farmworkers pay for transportation.

The vanpool program entails virtually no costs for the County or agricultural employers and offers agricultural workers a safe, legal and affordable form of transportation to and from work. The vans are fully insured, which will eliminate employer liability for accidents occurring on the way to or from work, an additional and important benefit for the agricultural sector.²¹

The implementation of a vanpool program offers numerous benefits for Napa County. It will increase highway safety by reducing the number of unlicensed drivers and poorly maintained and uninsured vehicles. It will reduce traffic and carbon emissions, while improving air quality. Recent traffic counts indicate that nearly 2,000 vehicles traverse Highway 29 at peak hours to access agricultural employment worksites. This number could be reduced by more than 10% if just 20 vanpools were established in Napa County.

Recommendations

Based on the assessment findings, we recommend that Napa County accept the Caltrans funding that has been allocated for the implementation of a farmworker vanpool program in Napa County. This is a win-win situation in which the County, agricultural workers, the agricultural industry and other stakeholders have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency (NCTPA) has been involved in this effort since its inception. It represents a potential administrating body for this program. If NCTPA does not feel it has the capacity to administer this program, it should consider sub-contracting with another agency.

²⁰ Strohlic et al (2007), op. cit.

²¹ For purposes of liability, vanpools are recognized as public vehicles under the law.