

Connect Douglas Fact Sheet

What is Connect Douglas?

Connect Douglas is a mobility-oriented service that operates fixed route bus service, ADA paratransit service and work-trip vanpools; offers transportation assistance to senior adults and disabled individuals, provides carpool matching assistance, builds and maintains commuter facilities and participates in transit and public transportation planning and marketing at the local, regional, state and national levels. Connect Douglas also works closely with the Georgia States Roads and Tollway Authority (SRTA), which provides Xpress bus service from Douglasville to Atlanta. From 1986 to October 2019, Connect Douglas operated under the name Douglas County Rideshare.

Connect Douglas is a program within the Transit Services Division of the Douglas County Department of Transportation.

Who operates Connect Douglas?

Connect Douglas is part of the Department of Transportation of the Douglas County government, and is governed by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners. Connect Douglas' offices are in the Douglas County Transportation Center, 8800 Dorris Road, Douglasville, behind the Douglas County Courthouse. Rideshare's phone number is 770-949-7665. The fax number is 770-920-7515. The e-mail address is vanpool@co.douglas.ga.us.

Who funds Connect Douglas?

Connect Douglas receives funding from several different sources. Commuters who participate in the vanpool program pay a monthly fare that covers costs such as fuel, maintenance and repairs and insurance. Douglas County provides funding for administrative costs, and many other county departments, such as Finance, Purchasing and Personnel assist Connect Douglas. Douglas County, the Federal Transit Administration and Georgia Department of Transportation share costs of capital projects.

Connect Douglas' fiscal year 2019 operating budget is approximately \$3 million. Passenger fares from vanpools and bus service make up about 10 percent of that amount, with the remainder coming from Douglas County funds and federal grants.

What policies govern Connect Douglas?

As part of the county government, Connect Douglas adheres to all policies and procedures established by the Board of Commissioners. However, there are also many state and federal regulations Connect Douglas must comply with in order to receive funding. Connect Douglas undergoes regular periodic reviews by the Federal Transit Administration, the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Georgia Department of Human Services, and also receives much valuable technical assistance on an on-going basis from those three entities.

How does the vanpool program work?

Connect Douglas currently operates 44 daily vanpools to metro Atlanta work locations. Participants meet the vans each morning at central locations in Douglas County and are driven to work. In the afternoon, participants are picked up at or near their work location and brought back to their pickup/drop-off location in Douglas County. Disabled individuals are encouraged to participate in the vanpool program.

In 2019, Connect Douglas will provide about 80,000 one-way passenger trips through its vanpool program. Currently, Connect Douglas has about 300 regular, daily vanpool participants.

Van drivers are volunteers who drive in exchange for not having to pay a monthly fare. In order to drive, an individual must complete an application, provide Connect Douglas with a copy of their Motor Vehicle Record, take a Defensive Driving Course, have a negative result for a drug screening and be approved by the Connect Douglas staff and the county's Office of Risk and Safety. The drivers and vans are covered by the Douglas County government's fleet insurance.

The number of riders on a van, the daily round trip mileage of the van and the van's history of repairs and expenses determine individual passenger fares. Monthly fares are paid in advance. Current monthly fares range from \$86 to \$195.

How does express bus service work?

For commuters going to downtown Atlanta or Midtown, the States Roads and Tollway Authority (SRTA) Xpress bus service is a good option. Buses leave and return from the Transportation Center and the Douglas Boulevard park and ride lot at convenient morning and afternoon times Monday through Friday. You can pay for bus trips on a daily basis, or purchase passes for multiple trips.

How does carpooling work?

Some commuters work in locations that are not served by Connect Douglas or Xpress buses. In these cases, Connect Douglas, with

assistance from Georgia Commute Options, tries to match the commuter with other individuals who work in the same area and have the same work hours. Connect Douglas maintains a list of individuals who have expressed a desire to carpool. There is no charge for carpool matching assistance provided by Connect Douglas or Georgia Commute Options. The phone number for Georgia Commute Options is 1-877-433-3463.

Where are the park and ride lots, and who can use them?

Connect Douglas' main commuter parking location is the Douglas County Transportation Center at 8800 Dorris Road behind the Douglas County Courthouse in Douglasville. The majority of Connect Douglas' van routes originate from there. However, Connect Douglas also has park and ride lots at I-20 and Thornton Road, I-20 and Post Road and Douglas Boulevard at Stewart Parkway. Carpoolers and vanpoolers are encouraged to use these locations at no charge. Park and ride lots are patrolled regularly by the Connect Douglas staff and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

What mobility help is available for senior adults and disabled individuals?

Connect Douglas has a Voucher program that helps seniors and disabled pay for Quality of Life trips. Participants can purchase \$100 in vouchers for \$10. The clients use these vouchers to pay private transportation providers to take them to doctors' offices, the pharmacy, grocery store, mall or to visit with friends and family. The goal of the program is to prevent seniors and disabled who have limited or no transportation options from becoming prisoners in their own homes. There are eligibility requirements. Contact the Connect Douglas office for more information.

Why does Connect Douglas participate in transit and public transportation planning?

In order to receive financial assistance from the state or federal government, Connect Douglas must have its projects listed in the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and State Implementation Plan (SIP). Connect Douglas submits its projects to the Atlanta Regional Commission for approval and inclusion in the TIP and SIP.

Also, good planning is essential as Douglas County and the metro area try to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The entire metro region is under federal mandate to reduce air pollution, and reducing vehicle emissions is considered the most practical way of achieving that goal.

In Douglas County and throughout metro Atlanta, government leaders understand that traffic and pollution problems cannot be solved by

increasing the capacity of roads and highways. That approach is simply too expensive and too unfriendly to the environment. This realization has resulted in an increased emphasis on public transportation and alternative forms of transportation such as Connect Douglas.

What's the best way to get involved with Connect Douglas?

Simply come by the office, call or send an e-mail. Connect Douglas is eager to work with individuals, small groups or companies. The Connect Douglas staff will try its best to tailor a plan to meet your transportation needs.

Connect Douglas started as Rideshare in 1986 with two vanpools, and now has 44. Connect Douglas' goal is to add at least five new vanpool routes every year.