

Dr. Bronner's Launches Employee Vanpool Program

By Brennan Ziegler



I am thrilled to share that [Dr. Bronner's](#), the Vista CA based producer of organic and fair trade certified personal care products, has launched a new employee vanpool program through Commute with Enterprise! This exciting initiative is a testament to our commitment to both sustainability and employee welfare. At Dr. Bronner's, we believe in treating our employees like family by creating an environment that supports growth, wellbeing, and success. Our new vanpooling program exemplifies this philosophy in action.



Vanpool participants receiving keys and vehicles from Enterprise. Photo: Brennan Ziegler, June 2024.

This program emerged from two key questions: 1) How can our company effectively reduce our Scope 3 emissions? And 2) How can our company support our employees amidst San Diego County's rising cost of living?

Understanding Scope 3 Emissions and Commute Challenges

Scope 3 emissions are the indirect greenhouse gas emissions from our entire value chain, including end-of-life treatment of sold products, business travel, employee commuting, etc. At Dr. Bronner's we recognize that our environmental impact extends beyond our production processes.

Dr. Bronner's facility in Vista, CA is in a commercial area with limited pedestrian access and poor public transit options, making commuting a challenge for many of our team members. This program seeks to tackle this issue head-on.

The Vanpooling Solution

Vanpooling might seem like a simple concept, but in the San Diego-area's sprawling and traffic-heavy environment, it can make a significant difference. By organizing Vanpooling, we aim to cut down on Scope 3 emissions and provide our employees with a more reliable and affordable way to get to work.

One vehicle with five employees, commuting 25 miles round trip each day, can reduce CO2 emissions by over 10 metric tons per year compared to individual driving. This is equal to over 150 trees being planted and growing for 10 years!

We are partnering with Enterprise Rent-A-Car to provide vehicles for our Vanpooling program. Through this partnership, employees save on fuel, maintenance, and wear and tear on their personal vehicles. The financial benefits are substantial, and Enterprise also offers emergency ride credits through San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) as an added incentive to enroll.

Addressing Employee Needs and Accessibility

Dr. Bronner's Vanpooling program is not simply about reducing emissions; it is also about supporting employees. Commuting to our Vista plant can be stressful and unreliable. With the new vanpooling program, employees no longer need to worry about car maintenance or unexpected breakdowns, preventing them from working. Plus, the shared responsibility of driving has already resulted in 100% punctuality among the initial participants.

This program is particularly beneficial for younger workers, lower-income households, and communities of color, who often face the greatest challenges with transportation in our county. By providing a reliable and affordable commuting option, we are removing barriers and helping our employees thrive.

Key Features of the Vanpooling Program

Here are some of the standout features of our new Vanpooling initiative:

- **Cost Savings:** Employees pay just \$50 per month, compared to ~\$285 for solo commuting. ([IRS, 2024](#))
- **Convenience:** Enterprise offers a range of vehicle sizes, allowing flexibility in forming vanpool groups.
- **Emergency Ride Credit and Subsidy** [SANDAG](#) provides \$500 per car and covers up to three emergency rides home per year for each participant.

Our partnership with Enterprise started with a serendipitous sales call amidst our early research into various vanpooling programs. This led to months of discussions and planning that culminated in the launch of a pilot program last month.

The pilot program focuses on first-shift production employees, chosen because they have consistent shift times and a clear need for a reliable commuting solution. These employees are also among the lowest-paid and most impacted by transportation challenges, making them the ideal group to benefit from this initiative.

The program offers month-to-month convenience, allowing employees to join or leave with just 30 days' notice. This flexibility encourages participation and ensures that employees can easily adapt the program to their needs.

Financial Implications and Savings

Here is a look at the program’s monthly impact:



See how much Dr. Bronner’s employees are saving with Commute with Enterprise

01 NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 360+	05 AVERAGE RETENTION SAVINGS ANNUALLY \$48,000
02 NUMBER OF VANPOOLERS 10	06 COMMUTER MILES REDUCED ANNUALLY 60,240
03 CURRENT VEHICLES 2	07 CO2 REDUCTION IN POUNDS ANNUALLY 65,000+
04 PARKING SPACES REDUCED 8	08 EMPLOYEE SAVINGS ANNUALLY \$34,200



Current data of pilot program. July 2024. Data provided by Commute with Enterprise.

The pilot program is already saving eight parking spaces per day, reducing traffic, and fostering cross-department connections.

Community and Environmental Impact

Our vanpooling program aligns with Dr. Bronner’s company objectives by:

- **Building a Culture of Belonging:** The program creates a sense of community among employees.
- **Supporting Organizational Resilience:** Reliable transportation enhances employee attendance, performance, and retention.
- **Encouraging Professional Growth:** A stable commute allows employees to focus on their roles rather than transportation issues.

Future Vision and Expansion

Looking ahead, we aim to expand the program to five vanpools covering 30 participants, which would save 25 parking spaces per day and further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This growth potential also presents an opportunity for the vanpooling program to become a key recruitment tool and a valued employee benefit.



Left to right: Ofelia, Yuusavi, and Martin posing with their vehicle. Photo: Brennan Ziegler, June 2024.

Conclusion

Dr. Bronner's new vanpooling program is a win-win for both our employees and the environment. It's an innovative step towards reducing our Scope 3 emissions while providing our team with a reliable and affordable transportation option.

We encourage other companies to explore similar initiatives and contribute to a more sustainable future.