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[World](#)
[Editorial](#)
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[Back to archives for](#)

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Capital idea: Carpools to the rescue!

Pritam Pal Singh

NEW DELHI June 6: Brainstorming over how to battle escalating fuel prices, Delhi chief minister, Mrs Sheila Dikshit has decided to start an Online carpool classified on Delhi government's website.

The carpool classified would enable commuters to post carpool requests and search for like minded commuters, their location and similar time work timings. "Carpooling is the immediate answer to the problem because it can be started with zero investment. If office-goers start carpooling, the city will be benefited. So, we are planning to start this Online carpool service within three to four days," Mrs Dikshit told The Statesman. Though experts praised the idea mooted by the state government they stated that government can only promote it, but it has to be the common people who will take it to mass level.

One such traffic expert, president, Institute of Road Traffic Education, Mr Rohit Baluja said: "Let's hope that the idea will find acceptance with the public. Building of new roads will cost a lot of money and time but if carpooling gets popular, a lot of money will be saved and public comfort will increase." "The commuters don't need to own a car to carpool as they can carpool with other car owners and share the fuel cost. Through this medium of car-pooling, fuel expenses, traffic chaos, pollution and carbon emissions can be effectively reduced," Mr Baluja added. However, some of the experts feel that Delhi is still not evolved enough for the concept to find popularity. "There are no separate lanes or parking spaces for car poolers, unlike in countries like the USA, South Africa and the UK. Also, there is no encouragement from employers in terms of carpooling incentives," a traffic expert said. "The carpooling could succeed if authorities step in. Individual agencies cannot change the scenario until the traffic department steps in. It has to help change people's mind set. The concept had come to city years ago but still has not been accepted on mass level," expert added.

In a survey carried out by Online carpool classified, www.indimoto.com, 70 per cent of the car poolers fall in the age group of 25-40 since they account for the most active working population and commute to work daily. Surprisingly, six per cent of the car poolers do not possess a private vehicle while 86 per cent own one or more cars. "Sixty-two per cent of the respondent appreciated the money-saving opportunity which car pooling has created while 53 per cent were doing it for traffic on choked city roads during the peak hours. Forty-one per cent said that they wanted to save precious fuel," the survey said. "Thirty eight per cent of the car poolers opted for it to increase social interaction with like-minded people. Thirty-one per cent of them opted for car pooling to reduce stress due to driving or commuting alone," the survey observed.

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