

Time to clean up th

Delhi govt plans tech push for carpools

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CARPOOLS may not have succeeded in Delhi so far but their benefits can't be disputed.

In an attempt to decongest city roads, the Delhi government plans to promote carpools in a big way. In a first of its kind attempt, the government wants to introduce smart card-based carpools in Delhi.

But before that, the government wants to know how receptive Delhiites are to the idea.

The transport department is posting a questionnaire on its website to find out if its concept would attract car owners.

"We are suggesting two vari-



Illustration: JAYANTO

ants — one is a hardware-based tracking system while the other is based on text messaging (SMS)," said Vishva Mohan, a joint commissioner in the transport department.

"We also want to gauge which of the two they would be comfortable with," he added.

The questionnaire, said a senior transport department official, would be posted on the department's website next week

and be available for about three weeks. "We would want at least 500 people to respond," he said.

According to Mohan, a conventional carpool has some inherent problems. Members necessarily have to be from the same or neighbouring colonies, should be working in the same office area, and should follow same office timings.

"We have suggested a technology-based system which

offers flexibility. A member can avail rides from any other member and return the ride to another member," said Mohan.

In the first system, each member's car would be fitted with a device comprising of a smart ID card reader, global positioning system (GPS) and general packet radio service (GPRS).

Every member would be issued a smart card-based photo ID. A member availing a ride will flash his ID before the device at the beginning and the end of the journey. The details would be recorded in the central server via GPRS.

In other variant, the rider would have to send a text to the central server to convey the driver's ID and odometer reading at the beginning and the end of the journey. The central server would reply by to confirm the transaction.

"The car's owner will earn mileage points. He would be able to avail those points by taking a ride," said Mohan.