



Harvard University Transportation Services: Improving the Environment Through Innovative Programs

Michael Conner

Harvard University is often thought of as a leader in academics and research. But the stalwart of the Ivy League is also attracting attention for the innovative transportation programs it offers to students, faculty, and staff. Harvard's Transportation Services has just expanded its long-standing partnership with Zipcar to include drivers 18 years of age and older — making it Greater Boston's first under-21 car sharing program. The partnership also includes Zimride, which matches members of the Harvard community for regular carpools or one-time trips. "Together, these programs will help reduce the total number of cars on campus, make access within this highly urban environment a bit easier, and provide significant cost-savings to university participants," said John Nolan, director of Transportation Services.

Harvard University and Zipcar have been working closely together for more than 10 years. In fact, Harvard is one of Zipcar's oldest and most successful university programs with more members (more than 7,200), and car-sharing

members in general, than any other university in the world. However, until now, cars were only available to drivers 21 years of age and older. Since most undergraduate students are between the ages of 18 and 21, developing a new program catering specifically to this audience is essential for continued growth.



With the launch of the 18+ program, memberships are expected to rise dramatically over the next year. To meet this growing demand, Transportation Services will increase the number of vehicles on campus to 20 by year's end, and most of them will be hybrids. There's even a pick-up truck for moving large items.

The on-campus vehicles aren't just available to current students, faculty, and staff — any Zipcar member can also utilize the on-campus vehicles.

Despite the name, Zimride offers a different — though complimentary — service than Zipcar. Zimride uses a customized web-based interface so Harvard faculty, staff, and students can find others with similar commuting patterns or one-time travel needs. The social network platform can be integrated with social networking site Facebook to help users establish trust with potential carpoolers. Just like with Facebook, Zimriders can view profiles for common networks, interests, and friends before deciding to share a ride.

Using Zimride and Zipcar together can mean greater cost savings. For instance, let's say you want to take a Zipcar for a day-trip to New York City or a sporting event at another school. Log on to Zimride, and it's easy to find others who may be travelling to the same destination, or even a destination along the way. By carpooling, you can effectively cut the cost of using the Zipcar in half. Zimride is also very effective for



“We are excited to offer programs that allow the Harvard community to easily find and share rides,” said Kris Locke, manager of Harvard’s CommuterChoice program — a group within Transportation Services. “Zimride’s rideshare solution is a great complement to our existing Zipcar program. With Zipcar and Zimride, we’re able to reduce congestion and make campus commuting more efficient for everyone.”

“By reducing the number of cars on campus and encouraging carpooling among students, faculty and staff, this partnership marks an important step forward in our sustainability goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide economically viable solutions that conserve resources,” said Heather Henriksen, director of Harvard’s Office for Sustainability.

These newly launched programs represent a much more comprehensive effort by Harvard University Transportation Services to be more sustainable. CommuterChoice, is a nationally recognized leader for helping students, faculty, and staff find more efficient modes of transportation. Each month, CommuterChoice brokers the sale of more than 6,000 discounted mass transit passes. The group also manages the growing Departmental Bike Program, which provides dozens of faculty and staff with bicycles for quick trips around campus. Throughout the year, there are also events such as Bike to Work and Walk to Work Day to promote alternative transportation.

An even more impressive figure is the university’s Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) rate, or the number of faculty and staff who drive just themselves to work. It stands at 14

percent while the national average is well over 70 percent. Those who do drive, find that even the parking garages are efficient. A recent lighting renovation project was implemented within the university’s parking garages. Efficient lighting fixtures and motion sensors were installed, saving enough electricity to power approximately 270 homes and reducing operating costs by about \$380,000 annually. On top of the Soldiers’ Field Park Garage on the Allston Campus, commuters undoubtedly notice the two large “wind-hunter” turbines. Transportation Services partnered with Harvard University Real Estate Services to install the pair of 10 kilowatt turbines, which are expected to reduce electricity consumption by approximately 10,000 kilowatt hours per year.

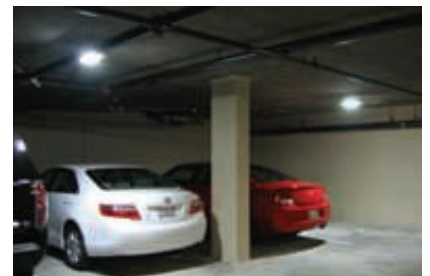
All of this work is being done with strong support from the university and dovetails neatly with Harvard’s broader sustainability goals. President Drew Faust recently pledged to reduce the university’s greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by the year 2016 — against a 2006 baseline. While many of these transportation programs may not directly affect Harvard’s greenhouse gas emissions, they do provide opportunities and incentives for students, faculty, and staff to adopt an overall lifestyle that is more environmentally sensitive. And the only way a large organization can reach such a lofty goal is if everyone involved in the effort truly believes it’s worth achieving.

For more information on any of these programs and initiatives, please visit www.commuter-choice.harvard.edu. Much more information on Harvard’s efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve overall environmental sustainability can be found at www.green.harvard.edu. ■

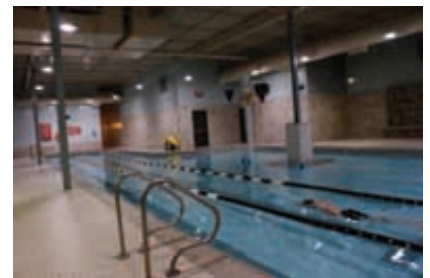
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