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### **Car-sharing group gets state grants to start up in 2007**

From Journal Staff Reports

ITHACA - With an award of \$177,220 from two state agencies to support its first two years of operation, Ithaca Carshare announced Friday it plans to offer the first car-sharing services in the Ithaca area as early as next spring and to expand operations later in 2007.

Members will have 24-hour access to cars that may be rented by the hour. The idea is to provide one when needed for people who need a car only occasionally, such as those who walk, bike or use public transit for most of their daily transportation, or for households with one or more cars who'd like to avoid getting another one for occasional use.

"We will start with two cars at EcoVillage, a neighborhood that has already had experience with informal car sharing, and then - after we've worked out any kinks - we plan to expand the service to downtown and then to the Ithaca College and Cornell campuses," said Ithaca Carshare coordinator Jennifer Dotson. *[NOTE: The pilot program at EcoVillage was later dropped in favor of including it the full launch.]*

Car sharing works on a membership basis, explained Tim Logue, City of Ithaca transportation engineer and a member of the Ithaca Carshare steering committee. Members who sign up have 24-hour access to a variety of new, clean, insured and well-maintained vehicles that may be rented by the hour. Car sharing solves many transportation problems for people who don't want the burden of owning a car for occasional use.

The funds are being provided through a cost-shared research agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, according to the organization. Ithaca Carshare is a nonprofit whose governing board includes representation from Ithaca College, Cornell University, EcoVillage at Ithaca, the City of Ithaca, and the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council. Details are being worked out on local partnership agreements for parking and other in-kind contributions from the member organizations, Dotson said.

Car-sharing services have been successfully established in many other communities in the U.S., Canada and Europe. Car sharing has been shown to save drivers money, reduce traffic and parking congestion and fit well with other modes of alternative transportation such as biking, walking and using public transit, according to the

Ithaca organization.

"We did quite a bit of market research that indicates that the Ithaca area is ready for a car-share service," said Dotson. "Getting the state funding has been a real boost. We're a bit amazed ourselves at how quickly this is all moving along."

Dotson noted that more than 41 percent of Ithaca residents walk to work, which suggests the concept may work well here. "Car sharing in Ithaca is somewhat of a test because we are a small city, but our market research into demographics and cultural characteristics tell us that it will be a rousing success," she added. Ithaca Carshare will be buying cars, but it will also take care of insurance, maintenance and gasoline, Dotson said.

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