

INDEPENDENT SINCE 1880

The Cornell Daily Sun

ONLINE

Published on *The Cornell Daily Sun* (<http://cornellsun.com>)

As Gas Prices Rise, C.U. Works To Limit Consumption of Fuel

By *Chris Kim*

Created Sep 23 2008 - 11:00pm

Although skyrocketing gas prices have made headlines and worried consumers recently, Cornell's fuel-related projects have pushed ahead without notice as the school year eases into rhythm.

Rising fuel costs — while a major concern for the general public — are not the primary motive behind many of Cornell's green initiatives designed to cut emissions and reduce fuel usage.

"It's more of an environmental issue than a monetary one," said Director of Transportation David Lieb '89. "One of President Skorton's major policies for the University is to be at the cutting edge of green technology."

Cornell's Sustainable Campus movement is a University-wide plan that encompasses several different areas of environmental sustainability, including energy, waste and transportation.

Lieb explained that Cornell offers a wide variety of services and transit alternatives that reduce the need for extraneous vehicle traffic. Red Runner is a courier service that can, "pick up, drop off, or deliver just about anything on campus and throughout the area," according to its website. C2C offers bus service between Cornell's Ithaca and New York City campuses, and the golf cart-like GEM vehicles can be seen zipping through the campus streets.

These services operate in alignment with Cornell's green policy, according to Lieb; the GEM vehicles are completely electric, and the C2C buses clock a hefty 100 passenger-miles to the gallon.

Despite these options, a walk through the midday campus will show no shortage of cars on the road. Many students still prefer the luxury of having their own car.

"It's extremely convenient," said Jeff Paley '10, as he prepared to leave the Target parking lot. "It's not vital, but I couldn't imagine life without one." Paley also remarked that gas prices have not affected his driving habits, nor the habits of other Cornell drivers. If anything, he says, "There seems to be more traffic this year."

However, numbers show just the opposite. In 2007, out of a class of roughly 3000 incoming freshmen, 122 brought their cars. That number has declined since 2005, when it was 146, and

more so since 2003 when it was 195. Lieb explained that the number of freshmen who bring cars is an ideal indicator of the student driver population, since all freshmen drivers must obtain on-campus parking permits.

“We really try to send a strong message to incoming students that you don’t need a car here,” Lieb said. The use of public transit among students is highly encouraged to alleviate traffic congestion on and around campus.

Lieb is also the chairman of Ithaca Carshare, a local nonprofit that allows its members access to its fleet of fuel-efficient Nissan Versas for hours at a time. Since Cornell has pre-purchased a number of memberships, students can get them for free on a first come, first serve basis.

While vehicles are the most apparent source of fuel expenditure on campus, the vast majority of Cornell’s usage and emissions is not to blame on motorists. Only sixteen percent of emissions are from commuter and visitor traffic, says Director of Utilities James Adams. The rest comes from the buildings.

“We’re performing a number of energy conservation projects throughout the year,” said Adams. “Most of the energy usage is from the laboratory buildings, so that’s where we’re focusing our efforts.”

Natural gas, the clean fuel powering the TCAT buses, accounts for only five to ten percent of heating needs. The main heating fuel at Cornell is still coal, although the ongoing development of the Cornell Combined Heat and Power project aims to reduce coal usage by up to 50 percent. This upgrade to the central heating plant is scheduled to be completed by 2010, and will supposedly increase efficiency, flexibility and reliability in Cornell’s heating and electricity production while reducing total emissions and costs.

[News Story](#) [cars](#) [gas price](#) [sustainability](#)

[Advertise with The Sun](#)

[Join The Sun](#) | [About CornellSun.com](#) | [About The Sun](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Posts and Comments are the exclusive property of their owners.

All other content © 2008 The Cornell Daily Sun

All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://cornellsun.com/node/31650>