

# THE ITHACAN **online**

PRINTER-FRIENDLY VERSION

## Car-sharing program proposed

BY KARA CUSOLITO | JANUARY 19, 2006

An informational summit on a proposed car-sharing program in Ithaca will be held next Thursday at Cornell University.

Car sharing, a member-based system where residents have access to a fleet of cars distributed throughout the region, is a form of alternative transportation. Members are able to schedule car use for a specific time, similar to an on-call rental service. Members pay a fee that covers the cost of insurance and gas, and shared vehicles get free parking around the city.

Dan Roth, a graduate student at Cornell University and event coordinator for the summit, said that though the idea has been circulating in Ithaca for about two years, the summit will be the first opportunity for local institutions to discuss the project.

Business students and Ithaca College's Sustainable Transportation Committee have been the main proponents of the program, Roth said. Marian Brown, special assistant to the provost and director of the committee, said the summit will be a good opportunity to address her questions on insurance issues, drivers with poor records and the age of the drivers.

Planners have two goals for the event, Roth said. These include identifying critical research questions and creating a structure for local organizations and individuals to collaborate. Roth said that he has not heard of any inherent problems with car-sharing programs. The main issue will likely be with generating widespread interest.

"Car shares represent a change in the transportation world," he said. "They require a shift in people's mind-sets." Brown said she looks forward to observing the program's progression in the city.

"Car sharing will not take away from public transportation but will work in adjunct to it," Brown said.

A group of four business students at Ithaca College created a business plan for the project. Senior Oscar Prada, member of the group, said the plan spelled out some of the necessary requirements to launch the program.

"Our hope was that in the future, if the program took off, it could be in part managed by students and serve as a learning opportunity," he said.

The program can be either for-profit or nonprofit, Roth said. While for-profit programs are owned by national corporations, nonprofit programs are usually run by local committees or residents. Ithaca's model will be developed based on the amount of local interest and how much control community members want to have in the project, he said.

Roth said that he is interested in incorporating environmentally friendly cars to compliment the program's mission.

These would include hybrid and electric vehicles, as well as cars that run on bio- diesel fuel, he said.

"I would say it's not a pie in the sky dream," he said. "It's very viable."

Several successful nonprofit car shares exist throughout the nation. Karen Worminghaus, executive director at Boulder CarShare in Colorado, said that the most important elements in getting a car-share program started are outside funding and public support. Worminghaus, also a member of the CarShare, said the program has made it easier for her to live in Boulder.

"It has been a tremendous asset to the community," she said. "It was the missing link in the transportation system." Directors from programs in San Francisco, Calif., and Boulder, Colo., will speak at the summit.

Other local organizations involved include EcoVillage, Curb Your Car, TCAT, Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council, Cornell University and the city of Ithaca. Planners hope that a pilot- scale program will be in place this fall.

---

*The Ithacan*: Park 269 Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY 14850  
The Weekly Newspaper of the Ithaca College Community.