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Tom Scherberger

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USF St. Petersburg introduces car-sharing program

Posted February 12, 2013 at 1:13 pm by [Tom Scherberger](#)



USF St. Petersburg Interim Regional Chancellor Bill Hogarth announces the launch of the first car-sharing program in Pinellas County.

USF St. Petersburg has launched its first car-sharing program, an affordable transportation alternative that will be available for students, faculty and the general public.

The new program, announced today by St. Petersburg Mayor Bill Foster and USFSP Interim Regional Chancellor Bill Hogarth, will be operated by WeCar by Enterprise, which runs a similar program at USF Tampa.

The program was initiated by the [Center for Urban Transportation Research](#) at USF Tampa in partnership with [WeCar by Enterprise](#), the Florida Department of Transportation District Seven

and USF St. Petersburg. The program is open to USF St. Petersburg students, faculty and staff immediately and to the general public in the coming weeks.

The membership-based, automated car rental option offers an environmentally sustainable, efficient and cost-effective alternative around the clock. Two vehicles, a Nissan Cube and a Fiat 500, will be available for [registered members](#) at covered spots at the USFSP parking garage, 250 5th Ave. South. More cars can be added depending on demand.

“We are extremely pleased to offer this affordable transportation option to the downtown community,” said Dr. Hogarth. “We hope the program will reduce the need for cars on campus and contribute to our ongoing sustainability efforts.”



Attending the launch of the WeCar program were (left to right) Student Government President Mark Lombardi-Nelson, Mayor Bill Foster, USF System Trustee Debbie Sembler, Interim Regional Chancellor Bill Hogarth and City Council Chair Karl Nurse.

Mayor Foster praised the initiative as the latest example of the longstanding partnership between the city and its only public university. “As the first green city in Florida, St. Petersburg is committed to being a good steward of the environment,” Foster said. “This program will enhance St. Petersburg’s reputation as a livable city.”

The program is a perfect fit for St. Petersburg’s pedestrian-friendly environment and large population of downtown residents who may opt not to own a vehicle.

Under the program, USFSP students who are registered members 18 or older can reserve a car online. They access the vehicle using a membership card and then return it to the same location. Fuel, basic physical damage and state-required liability protection are included in the standard rate plan, which begins at \$8.50 an hour. Non-students must be at least 21.

Car-sharing programs are especially popular with students because they provide a solution to car rental age restrictions as well as financial concerns associated with having a car on campus. A credit card is required to register.

The program is designed for short trips, such as a day at the beach or shopping at the mall. Full-day rentals are also available.

“Our car-sharing program is a sustainable, totally automated and efficient mobility option that can help alleviate parking and transportation challenges at universities across the country,” said Ryan Johnson, assistant vice president of WeCar and Rideshare for Enterprise.

USF’s Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) conducted a study of the car-sharing program’s impact on travel behavior. “The study, funded with grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Florida Department of Transportation, found that participants in car-sharing programs modified their travel behavior based on a dynamic price structure,” said Julie Bond, senior research associate at the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research.

USF St. Petersburg’s downtown location is a plus, said Mayor Foster, because hundreds of apartment and condo dwellers live within a short walk of the WeCar site.

WeCar programs are supported by the extensive Enterprise Rent-A-Car neighborhood network of more than 5,500 rental offices located within 15 miles of 90 percent of the U.S. population. Local Enterprise operations maintain cars and have the flexibility to add WeCar vehicles to meet demand. The company operates car-sharing programs at more than 50 colleges across the U.S. and Canada as well as corporate, government, military and downtown locations.

Eckerd College launched a similar program last summer, run by U-Haul, open to students, faculty and staff.

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