

VEHICLE SHARING FOR BUSINESS PILOT

Executive Summary
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ABSTRACT

The Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC) recommends that vehicle sharing (VS) is a viable alternative to vehicle ownership for light industrial businesses in Vancouver. The VEC launched this study to assess the viability of vehicle sharing in the Flats. To do this, the VEC worked with extensive input from thirteen Flats businesses to envision a vehicle-sharing pilot program. Engagement is ongoing at the time of report completion. If the businesses ultimately decide to commit to vehicle sharing, the VEC will work with them to launch a pilot program. If the pilot is successful, the VEC can repeat this study process over coming years with businesses in other industrial areas across Vancouver.

BACKGROUND

The False Creek Flats is a densifying light industrial district in central Vancouver. Employment in the area is expected to triple in the next 15 years. With more jobs and more companies moving in, the Flats needs more efficient transportation systems.

Vehicle sharing programs are designed to enable users to rent vehicles for short trips as needed, often for trips lasting an hour or less. VS can help businesses reduce the financial and environmental costs of transporting goods and people by enabling them to access a lower emission fleet with the right sized vehicle for the job. Generally, small and medium businesses have limited capital to purchase newer lower emission vehicles. VS programs allows businesses to more efficiently use vehicles, so each shared vehicle can replace multiple private vehicles. VS could also reduce the need for employees to bring personal vehicles for work purposes, freeing those employees to take different modes of transportation to work such as transit or cycling.

There are two main vehicle share models applicable to this pilot: 1) the businesses own and share their vehicles or 2) the businesses use a vehicle share organization's service. Because the pilot group is located in one area of the city, the vehicle share model must be two-way, meaning that vehicles are returned a single nearby location.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

The VEC engaged with businesses in the Flats to find a study group located in close proximity, ultimately finding a group of thirteen keen business. The most important transportation values identified by the businesses in the VEC's pilot planning engagement session were maximizing transportation quality and reliability, safety, cleanliness, access, community benefit and minimizing staff time.

Maximizing cleanliness, for example, ties into the quality and reliability of the vehicle (will wood chips from the previous user get near the cake being transported by the next user?) and to safety (is this a clean and secure environment for my employees?). Minimizing pollution was a high priority for several larger participating businesses, but it was not as important for smaller businesses who are struggling to become established. These values, plus cost, formed the basis for comparing VS models.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For this pilot, the VEC recommends that businesses partner with either Modo or Enterprise CarShare to choose a VS model that best aligns with their transportation values and is sustainable over time. Both organizations have been engaged in planning the pilot and are keen to offer VS models that suit Flats businesses.

The VEC does not recommend that pilot participants share their existing vehicles for several reasons. The insurance that would allow businesses to rent their vehicles to others is prohibitively expensive. It would require the vehicles to be utilized an unrealistically high amount in order to break even on the insurance cost. The organizational and administrative time commitments to organize this type of sharing would be onerous. Lastly, there are only three vehicles that businesses in this group are willing to share. As three vehicles is minimum number that any of the technology providers contacted would administer, there is the risk the the entire pilot would fold if even one vehicle was pulled from the pilot.

The VEC recommends hosting another engagement session to have participating businesses decide on the VS model and the vehicle types that best suits their needs and decide on a vehicle share organization to work with. The VEC will then work with the businesses and the chosen VSO to determine the nuts and bolts of how a pilot would proceed. Based on the business's decision, this effort would culminate in launching a pilot project in the fall of 2017.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge gained through this pilot can be applied throughout the City of Vancouver. The VEC, the City or a VSO can use the methods in this report to identify other clusters of businesses in the City to launch VS programs. One cluster that is well placed to benefit from vehicle sharing, for example, is commissary kitchens.

The VEC has found that VS is a viable way to move towards meeting many of the City of Vancouver's Greenest City Action Plan goals. As a vehicle share scheme matures, the City can work with VSOs to ensure that new vehicles added are electric or more fuel efficient. VS can help businesses green their operations, assist in meeting the city's green transportation goals, test the viability of VS for businesses as a part of developing a municipal sharing economy strategy, and potentially help the city achieve cleaner air.

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