

Zipcar is coming to Syracuse .
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Syracuse University finalized a contract Thursday with Zipcar, a Massachusetts-based car sharing company, according Al Sauer, director of Parking and Transit Services at SU.

“It is going to be something we’re going to do,” said Sauer, confirming rumors that a Zipcar program would be introduced at SU. “That’s a definite.”

Zipcar—started in 1999 in Cambridge, Mass.—is one of the world’s largest car sharing companies with nearly 200,000 members worldwide, according to information released by Zipcar. Members pay an annual fee to join the program and then can go online to reserve the use of cars parked in their area. Zipcar covers the costs of gas, maintenance and insurance for the vehicles. Members are charged an hourly fee for each use—usually lower than ten dollars.

On college campuses, schools partner with Zipcar to provide a number of vehicles on or around the campus. Students, faculty and staff can sign up for the program through Zipcar and have access to the cars on campus. Members over the age of 21 can also reserve Zipcars in other cities. The annual fee for a member joining through a college is typically \$35.

At SU, the contract with Zipcar is definite but university officials, said Sauer, are still working out some details such as the number and type cars that will be on campus, the hourly rate that members will be charged and how information about the program will be made available to students, faculty and staff. The program is expected be in effect by the end of the fall semester, Sauer said.

Talks about bringing Zipcar to Syracuse began with Alejandro Fernandez-Lovo, director of off campus affairs for the Student Association. He introduced Zipcar, he said, as a way to address overcrowded parking on the SU campus and the university’s goal to reduce its carbon emissions. University officials, he said, had been looking into Zipcar as an option for SU and decided to get the idea moving once they became aware of student interest.

“Once they saw students wanted it,” said Fernandez-Lovo. “They said ‘okay, perfect.’”

Fernandez-Lovo expressed confidence that putting a Zipcar program in place at SU would support the university’s goal of making SU an environmentally-sustainable campus. “If you have 50 to 100 people sharing one car,” he said. “Do you know how much carbon emissions is going to go down?”

Melissa Cadwell, of the university’s sustainability program, also expressed optimism that Zipcar would be an environmentally-sustainable option for the university. “It’s beneficial,” she said. “Lowering carbon on campus; lowering the number of vehicles on campus.”

The program, Cadwell said, would encourage students to carpool to places like the supermarket rather than all having their own cars. It would also, she said, make traveling to work via public transportation or a carpool a more feasible option for university employees because it would allow them to run errands from work without having a car parked on campus.

Zipcar prides itself as being an environmentally-friendly option. Based on a survey of its members in July, Zipcar estimates that it saves 16 million gallons of gasoline and 150 million pounds of carbon dioxide annually. Based on the same survey and studies by government transportation agencies, it estimates that the adding of each car to its fleet results in an average of 15 less privately-owned vehicles being on the road.

What effect a Zipcar program will have at S.U. is hard to predict because it depends on the program's popularity. This also proves challenging because Zipcar, as a rule, does not release specifics on membership at individual schools, said Maria Martinez, a representative for Zipcar. This makes it difficult to assess the popularity of programs at other schools. Nationally, Zipcar's college program has more than 20,000 members at more than 70 universities, according to information released by Zipcar.

University of Rochester, is starting its second academic year with a Zipcar program. Although she does not know the number of Zipcar members on campus, Nancy Dailey, supervisor of campus operations for Parking and Transportation Services at University of Rochester, said she notices students using the four cars—a Honda Element, a Mazda 3 Sports Sedan, a Toyota Matrix Sports Wagon and a Toyota Prius—that are on campus.

“A lot of times you look and all four of them are gone,” she said. Dailey said she finds that students often use the cars to get to 24-hour stores late at night.

Because Zipcar only fully insures drivers over the age of 21, University of Rochester, said Dailey, has to pay the difference to make sure that its younger students are completely insured—with comprehensive issuance rather than just liability.

Insurance is part of the contract negotiations between the universities and Zipcar but SU has not yet released information on how, if at all, it will insure younger drivers. Not insuring younger students, said Scot Vanderpool of Parking and Transit Services at SU, “would take freshmen out of the picture.” Individuals involved in the planning process, however, expressed hope that younger students would be able to use the Zipcar program.

“The aim is going to be freshmen and sophomores,” said Fernandez-Lovo of the Student Association. The hope, he said, is that younger students will use the program during their first two years at school and then not bring cars to campus as upper classmen.

University officials expect that an official announcement of the program's details will likely be made within the next couple weeks