

# Carpooling just got easier | The UWM Post

Posted on 09 May 2011.

For those of us who have heard one too many hitchhiking stories from our fathers, seen the movie *Wolf Creek*, or are too weary to utilize Craigslist's rideshare listings, a new alternative to catching rides is coming to campus.

Soon UW-Milwaukee will have its own rideshare service specifically for the campus community. The university's Parking, Sustainability, and Housing departments have teamed up to give UWM access to Zimride, an online ridesharing social network.

"It's like an electronic type of rideshare," as University Housing Director Scott Peak defines it. "If you want to go somewhere, you use a social network to gather people who are going places."

Zimride is related to the already-established Zipcar program that rents cars to university students, faculty and staff. Zipcar renters must first become members and pay several fees before getting behind the wheel.

The biggest difference between the two is that Zimride is entirely free to the UWM community, although University Housing and Parking & Transit will pick up the bill to keep the program's online software running.

Sustainability Coordinator Kate Nelson organized the university's adoption of the program in an effort to usher in more "green" options to campus.

"Zimride is a rideshare social-networking program," said Nelson. "It helps students, staff and faculty find commuter rides, or they can offer up rides."

Because of its ease of access, users will be better able to participate in "going green" efforts.

"It's really approachable," says Nelson, "and it's better than buying a hybrid."

Essentially, Zimride is an online service in which members post and ask for rides, but it also offers a bit more.

In addition to displaying where rides are coming from and going to, the service will also calculate the carbon savings from carpooling together.

Of course, the idea of carpooling with strangers may distress some folks; however, Zimride adds an eHarmony element to the mix.

Riders' online profiles include things like music-volume preferences, whether or not the user is a smoker, car type, and so on. The service even aggregates ratings for its members.

"There's a lot of trust built in the system," Nelson maintains.

Zimride is used by numerous other campuses in the United States, and its popularity continues to grow.

"You connect with everyone in the Zimride program," says Nelson. "It can be across the state, even across the country."

Though the program hasn't officially been initiated, Nelson asserts that Zimride will be up and running soon.

"We just got the approval through purchasing. We'll do a soft launch late May or early June, but we'll really push it hard at the beginning of next semester."