**PEG CITY CAR CO-OP**

*Peg City Car Co-op*, launched in the spring of 2011, addresses social and environmental well-being. As a member of the Car Sharing Association, the Co-op is designed to support public transit and environmental goals which include:

- supporting residents to walk, cycle and use transit for the majority of their travel
- decreasing personal car ownership
- reducing vehicle distance travelled
- improving urban land use and development
- providing affordable access to vehicles for all constituencies

The Co-op currently has three vehicles located in parking spots in Osborne Village and South Osborne. The plan is to expand the fleet as Co-op membership grows.

The Co-op is very simple to join and use. Once people become members, they access the on-line booking system at [www.pegcitycarcoop.ca](http://www.pegcitycarcoop.ca). The system allows members to pick the date and time they need a vehicle as well as the pick-up location. Fees are very reasonable with a $3 booking fee, usage fees of $3 per hour plus .40 cents per kilometre. A slight fuel surcharge is added when the price of gas increases but the goal is to keep the fees as reasonable as possible so the program is accessible.

Although vehicles can be booked on-line, support is available from the Co-op staff at all times. They offer office hours five days per week and are always on call to assist with Co-op member needs. While cleaning the interior of the vehicle is the responsibility of the member, the car is re-fueled and maintained by staff. You might even find a CD of local artists in your vehicle!

**Some Challenges**

Although four co-founders started exploring the idea of establishing a car-share back in 2007, it took until 2011 to launch with a firm business plan and financing.

While McKechnie now has part-time hours officially devoted to managing the Co-op, originally the four were doing the background work on top of their regular job responsibilities. As a result, it took longer than expected, but a feasibility study was completed, community meetings were held, and a small and committed group of people stepped forward to help do the work needed to make the Co-op a reality.

Although people were very enthusiastic about the idea of a car-share, the challenge was getting a commitment from people with the needed expertise. They dealt with this challenge by working with a core group of keen...
volunteers while continuing to call on a larger group of community members with varied interests and expertise as needed.

Media coverage and excitement generated can be both beneficial and challenging. This “new” and “trendy” concept did get a fair amount of media coverage which resulted in people wanting access to a vehicle close to their home. It was difficult for some people to hear that the Co-op was not looking to expand into their neighbourhood in the immediate future. This type of outside pressures and new ideas can make it difficult to stay focused on the core activities and goals before expanding the car-share concept.

LESSONS LEARNED

A formal commitment from everyone involved may not be necessary. You may just need a core group and the willingness from others to "keep up the enthusiasm" and be called on as needed. McKechnie found that creating enthusiasm and connections were important factors in getting up and running. Not being afraid to ask for help from others that have done similar things was also important. McKechnie notes that car-shares across the country were and continue to be very generous with advice and guidance.

Collaboration with a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds, interests and contacts is immensely beneficial. Some people may not even realize they have an interest in what you are doing until you show them. For example, Canada Safeway may not be an obvious partner. However, once they understood how providing the Co-op with a permanent parking spot could benefit Safeway (and the neighbourhood), they were on board. Referring to a similar partnership with Safeway in Vancouver also helped.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Have at least one paid staff member.
- Focus on customer service, no matter who the customer is.
- Maintain a core group and keep others in the loop so they can continue to share interest and enthusiasm about the initiative.
- Always think about who to “align with” and who “shares values”. Some fit better than others and some won’t be an obvious fit at first – keep thinking and asking others.

Be prepared to explain your vision and mission and stick with it. McKechnie explains that although some people think of this as an initiative to address needs of lower income individuals, this is not necessarily the case. It is primarily an environmental initiative and key factors such as population density and income must be considered before placing a car in a neighbourhood. You may face disagreement from those who believe that the mission of your initiative should be broad enough to address their interests. Keep in mind that you cannot be everything to all people.

Remember that no matter how many meetings you have or reports you send out, “word of mouth is key”. If people have a positive experience (or not) with your initiative, this information will be passed on to others in the community.

Finally, McKechnie indicates that she has learned the importance of patience and realistic expectations. Because people can lose interest when things do not proceed quickly, you need to find highly motivated people that will stick with the idea even when things are not going as rapidly as hoped.

Don’t be afraid to ask for advice and accept help on the small things as well as the big things!