

NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHEME EXPERIMENT PLANNED

A LONDON lecturer is planning to provide fleet car benefits to the general public.

An experiment starting soon in Richmond will be the first Neighbourhood Car Fleet in Britain but; says project director Tim Pharoah, 'experiments in other countries, especially Sweden and America, have shown that the NCF idea is both economically viable and popular with those who participate.'

The Richmond trial scheme aims to incorporate the best features of eight different schemes already operating around the world.

Subscription

Drivers will be invited to pay, say, an annual subscription of £100 to the NCF 'club' which will promise them constant access to any one of a fleet of cars kept locally.

Initially, the scheme will take on 25 customer drivers and, probably a dozen Vauxhall Astras.

The users will each be supplied with a tamper-proof electronic key which will record the number of miles they drive. They will be charged between 30p and 40p a mile and, initially at least, there will be no minimum charge.

FLEET CLUB TAKES TO THE STREET

are going to catch on in the domestic market, they must be attractive as a commercial venture.

'The potential market could be as large as 25% of all households, but progress will depend on being able to demonstrate the benefits through a properly funded trial scheme.

Sponsors

'Firms in the motor industry — including the leasing, contract hire and car rental sectors — are now being invited to sponsor the Richmond scheme and to provide the start-up cash and guarantees to enable it to run for a minimum two-year trial period.'

The 12 Richmond cars will be

parked in residents' bays on the street. Club members will be vetted to ensure that they are a good insurance risk and a close eye will be kept on proceedings by Pharoah's research colleagues at the South Bank Polytechnic.

Pharoah has visited a couple of similar schemes in America and said that one in San Francisco supplied Chrysler with enormous publicity for providing the cars.

Companies or individuals interested in sponsoring the scheme should contact Tim Pharoah, NCF Project Director, Department of Town Planning, South Bank Polytechnic, Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2JZ (tel: 01-928-8989 ext 7010 or 7007).

Join the club and have a car at your service

A SCHEME to bring the benefits of fleet cars to the public is to be tried for the first time in this country.

Later this year, the London borough of Richmond, and the South Bank Polytechnic, will jointly launch a Neighbourhood Car Fleet in the Richmond area.

The initial fleet will consist of 15 new cars, of identical make, supplied on contract hire for two years. At first, membership will be about 20 people with a waiting list of a further 20.

Shared

The director of the scheme, polytechnic lecturer, Tim Pharoah, explains that the NCF concept is not the same as "car sharing," which relates to shared rides in individually owned cars.

"The basic idea is that drivers living in the selected locality subscribe to a club that owns or manages

TRANSPORT FILE

By Iain Murray

a fleet of cars," he says. "Membership provides access to any of these cars on a pay-as-you-drive rental system."

The cars are equipped with a travel cost recorder metering device so that each member can be billed according to his or her use of the fleet. Because the scheme is based in a small

area, the cars will always be returned to the correct locality.

Tim Pharoah has studied NCFs in eight countries, and believes they have clear benefits.

Car owners can dispose of their own vehicles and save on travel costs; non-car owners will have access to cars in a way that is more flexible and convenient than conventional rental.

The community at large will benefit by having fewer vehicles on the roads.

Car share idea for the hill

A UNIQUE idea to introduce a neighbourhood car fleet scheme into the borough has been approved by Richmond Council's highways committee.

The idea, already in operation in some parts of America and Scandinavia, has been put forward by Tim Pharoah and Trevor Yerworth of the South Bank Polytechnic.

They are hoping that the scheme can be introduced to those residential areas where parking is at a premium, such as Richmond Hill.

"The idea is that residents become members of something akin to a local car rental company", Tim explained. "They would have to sell their own cars and instead would have access to the cars owned either by a private company or co-operative.

"This would mean that fewer cars for the same number of people would be needed which would help to relieve parking problems. Also, residents pay according to how much they used the car. For low mileage car owners, this would be of benefit".

Tim says that for a car similar to a Vauxhall Astra, it would cost 55-40p a mile. For owners travelling less than 7,000 miles a year, the cost is similar, but they also have to take into account the 'added extras' such as servicing and MoTs.

Each resident would have a key to fit all the cars in the fleet.

When they wanted to use

a car, they would programme in their own personal code and the electronic device would record the bill.

In case of a breakdown, there would be a priority booking system with another rental company.

Initially, there would be 10-15 cars in the fleet with around 30 members of the scheme. Three areas have already been pinpointed as problem areas. Richmond Hill, The Alberts and Sandringham Court.

Now that the scheme has got approval from the highways committee, attempts will be made to find a sponsor. After that, there will be public consultations and it is thought it will finally get underway next summer.

Chairman of the highways committee, Cllr. Martin Elengorn, said: "It makes sense in town centres where there are parking problems".

RICHMOND AND TWICKENHAM
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ADVANCE NOTICE

Nicholas Albery, chairman of the Institute for Social Innovations, describes more innovating ideas and projects

Reasons OR parents who want to get on with their children

Opening the roads of crush and chaos: see Cars in common

member and ex-editor of Parent magazine, says that suitable candidates are those who already have some experience of working with groups, either in a voluntary or professional capacity, and who are also parents. Training will not begin until April next year, but there are introductory meetings in London for potential coordinators on November 13 and December 2.

The Parent Network is at 44 Coverham Road, London NW5 (01-485 8335).

Cars in common

TIM PHAROAH, a town planner at the South Bank Polytechnic, is trying to set up a neighbourhood fleet as an alternative to car ownership. In cooperation with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It is based on successful schemes in France, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan, and the USA.

The Richmond Hill scheme will cover about 100 dwellings, with 15 cars run by a non-profit company. Twenty-two people want to join and

eight others are still considering doing so. Car owners will be encouraged to sell their vehicles and use the fleet. Cars will be equipped with travel cost recorder metering devices, and members will be billed by monthly direct debit at a mileage charge of about 33p. It is, in effect, a cheaper, more convenient, and flexible form of local car rental firm.

But in this way, the community will benefit from less congestion and parking, while participants will not have to maintain their own vehicles and will save on travel costs.

Pharoah is looking for sponsorship for this first car fleet from a car rental company, manufacturer, or public transport agency, which would, as the projects abroad have demonstrated, benefit from the publicity of a socially useful experiment.

Village aid

AN imaginative Third World aid project is being piloted by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), whereby a per-

sonal contribution of £2.50 a month is made towards the expenses of a particular village volunteer development worker in the Third World in return for the villager's name, photo, and reports describing work in the village. The ICA is currently looking after the work of 500 "village volunteers" in 2,000 villages.

"Village volunteers" are local people who have dedicated themselves to the building of a better future for their village and to working alongside fellow villagers. The ICA provides up to six months' intensive training in development methods, practical, and leadership skills, and then the volunteers work in teams of two or three to help their village draw up an action plan and organise neighbourhood task groups.

The project offers an alternative to villagers' criticisms that government or aid agencies bring about development which results in stifling local initiative and dependency on inappropriate and unwanted programmes. The village volunteers project offers an alternative.

Rural Development, with the names, addresses, and descriptions of 290 projects, sponsored by various agencies, with an analysis of the key factors that successful projects share. It costs £12.50 from ICA, 277 St Ann's Road, London N15 (01-802 2848). As the ICA writes:

"...needs to be placed on the successes in development, so that hope in the future can be founded realistically on past experience. A means must be found for massively accelerating the development of approaches that work."

Guru's catechism

IN the wake of recent scandals surrounding the Bhagwan and Hare Krishna religions in the United States, the Institute is compiling a list of questions that a would-be disciple could ask before joining up with a guru or new cult. The total of "yes" answers to questions such as the following could provide a rough and ready comparative safety rating of gurus:

- Is what the guru offers free?
- Is the guru poor and not in control of large amounts of money?
- Is it easy to leave the guru and are ex-disciples treated satisfactorily?
- Does the guru refrain from sexual involvement with the disciples?
- Is free contact allowed with family and friends?
- Is there respect for quality in the work of the guru's organisation (no ugly architecture for instance)?
- Are the guru's words in harmony with past spiritual insights such as contained in Huxley's Perennial Philosophy anthology?
- Is the organisation non-authoritarian?
- Are there signs of democracy or of questioning and debate and thinking for oneself?

Adding the "yes" responses to these and similar questions with reference to four contemporary gurus produced the following percentage results: a Guru Quotient (GQ) for Bhagwan of 29 (out of 100), the Hare Krishna movement (post-Bhaktivedanta in the US) 29, Leonard Orr (of Rebirthing) 57, Stephen Gaskin (from the Farm commune in Tennessee) 88, and the late Krishnamurti 100.

These ratings do not necessarily reflect what a disciple can learn from a particular guru, but would-be disciples might be advised to steer clear of involvement with low GQ gurus. Please send additional suggestions for questions to the Institute.

For full details of the Institute and its £1,000 competition for innovative ideas and projects, send four first class stamps to the address below. Best Ideas, a Directory of Social Innovations, covering the best 200 schemes from the Institute's first year, will be published next month and can be ordered for £9.95 postpaid from: The Institute for Social Innovations, 24 Abercorn Place, London NW8 9XP.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Car-Sharing Experiment in San Francisco Promises to Trim Auto Use and Expenses

By SCOTT D. SCHUH

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
A car-sharing plan, designed to reduce dependence on private transportation in urban areas, is being tried out in San Francisco.

Star Company, named after the acronym for short-term auto rental, is a car rental club exclusively for the 9,000 residents at Parkmerced, a sprawling apartment complex in west San Francisco. Instead of sharing a ride, as in car-pooling, Star members pay \$25 a year to share cars, which are garaged on the premises. Insurance, road service, car washing and repairs are included.

Car-sharing projects have been tried in Europe since the early 1970s. Among them, a French system, Procotip, served 17 locations in Montpellier; in Amsterdam, the Witkar system used electric cars. Both programs went bankrupt, after 18 months and seven years respectively. Currently, two Swedish cities have small projects, one of which involves agreements between car-owning and non-car owning households. In Britain, Green Car uses the same principle.

John Crain, president of Crain & Associates, an urban transportation consulting firm in Los Altos, Calif., started Star. Mr. Crain had studied the European systems and, he says, borrowed the best features from all of them. He has put about \$200,000 into the project, which he thinks will become a profitable enterprise.

Star members choose from among three classes of cars—runabout, middle-size and full-size (including pickups and wagons)—from two to five years old. The short-term (10 hours or less) charge for a runabout model is one cent a minute plus 14 cents a

mile, gas included. Long-term runs \$6 a day and 10 cents a mile, no gas included. A 30-minute shopping trip in a runabout could cost less than \$1; a two-day, 100-mile weekend trip would cost less than \$30. Customers receive a monthly statement similar to a telephone bill.

Mr. Crain believes that the Star program creates "societal benefits," the most important, being fewer vehicle miles traveled.

Members cannot ignore fixed costs such as the car's price, depreciation and insurance, as an automobile owner would. They find themselves comparing the cost of renting with that of public transportation and/or walking. Theoretically, they will opt for the latter two more often than they would have before.

Mr. Crain concedes that auto-sharing is limited in its uses. "The concept works—it's economically viable," he says, "in a central city complex, with excellent public transportation, where the structural facilities (garage, gas pump, office) are already in place. It has enormous implications for Manhattan," he adds, "and other cities like San Francisco."

A Hertz Corp. spokesman in New York disagrees. Most rental-car customers, he says, are "fly-drive" customers. He adds that in New York, high garaging costs would prevent the success of Star-like programs.

Nevertheless, the Parkmerced users seem enthusiastic about Star. Betty White, a lecturer at San Francisco State University, now lives what she calls "a carless and carefree existence." "I sold my car," she says, "just so that I could use Star." Ms. White finds herself walking and using public transit more; even if Star folded, she says, she wouldn't buy another car.

"It has been very, very economical and

the cars have been fine," adds Carol Bass. She lost the use of a company car when her business partnership dissolved but won't buy another for now—not when she's only paying 94 cents to take her child four miles to school.

Mr. Crain surveyed the first 100 members in April and found that six had sold their cars in favor of Star. Sixteen others had some car-ownership decision directly affected. Membership has risen to 240 households (5.5%) since start-up in December, the fleet stands at 53 cars, and the business broke even after six months.

Currently, the only similar project in the U.S. is the Mobility Enterprise experiment, operating since January 1983 at Purdue University. Ten families of university employees receive unlimited use of a two- or three-cylinder Japanese mini/micro car (one per family) as members, but also have rental access to medium- and full-size cars.

The federal Urban Mass Transit Administration is helping to fund an evaluation of Star to be used by the administration in advising prospective Star operators. Larry Bruno, a transportation manager with the agency, says, "If the program works, we'd like to see the information spread around." The agency is considering funding a study for a similar program in Rochester, N.Y., but there are no plans to subsidize the programs themselves.

Because the success of such projects depends, in part, on rising car costs and because the shared auto market is virtually untested, widespread use is unlikely soon. Michael Doherty, research coordinator at the Purdue Automotive Transportation Center, says, "I think it's an idea a little ahead of its time," perhaps eight to 10 years.