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Seattle paying to keep cars off the road

October 25, 2000
Web posted at: 11:41 p.m. EDT (0341 GMT)

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The pilot program pays people to use alternative forms of transportation

SEATTLE, Washington (CNN) -- The city of Seattle is paying some residents to stop using their second vehicles.

The goal? To encourage even more people to get out of their cars, thereby reducing traffic congestion.

"Our long term goal isn't to fund every family in Seattle to give up their extra car, because in reality they can do it in real life," said Jemae Pope of the Seattle Strategic Planning Office.

"It's more to have some really good case studies, to have people start thinking what works and what doesn't work."

\$85 a week

Those chosen for the program can walk, carpool or take the bus. They are paid \$85 a week, about the same amount they would save if they got rid of their second car.

Sharon Griggins Davis says life without a car means relying more on two wheelers; a bike for trips downtown, a cart for groceries.

"I don't know if it's going to work for everybody, but it's going to work for people like me, who are just in the habit of making trips that really aren't that necessary," she said. "I really can walk to the grocery store, and I have a little grocery cart, and I don't care if I look like a bag lady."

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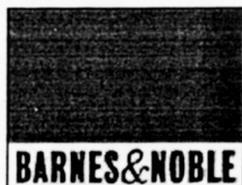
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Families can do whatever they want with the cash, just as long as they keep that car off the streets.

Odometers are checked

The city will check the odometer to make sure participants are playing by the rules.

Davis says leaving the car parked is often just a change of habit. "We just fall into the habit of, 'Oh, let's get into the car and go there instead of walking or biking or doing that kind of thing,' so I thought, this is my chance to teach my kids that they can walk."

The program is scheduled to last six weeks; time enough, city leaders hope, to get Seattle residents off on the right foot.

CNN Newsource Correspondent Lilian Kim contributed to this report.

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