



March 31, 2016

Subject: Update on the Point-to-Point Carsharing Demonstration Study: Five Months In

This is a status report on the progress of the point-to-point carsharing demonstration in Arlington. The Point –to-Point Carsharing Demonstration Study Agreement was executed September 1, 2015, and service began on October 22, 2015. At the County Board hearing last summer to authorize execution of the demonstration study agreement, staff made a verbal agreement with the Board to provide this mid-way update with available information on the reception and performance of the service, on the communications efforts, and in general the commitments made within the agreement.

As a reminder, point-to-point carsharing refers to a service where members are provided with access to a fleet of vehicles for short-term use, priced by the hour or minute, located conveniently throughout the community, and with all costs (such as gas, maintenance, and insurance) bundled into the rate, and where trips can start and end in different locations. This is the first time Arlington has tried a point-to-point carsharing service, although the service model has been available in the District of Columbia since 2012.

Status Summary

The program is operating largely within the parameters of the demonstration study agreement. There are almost 2,000 Arlington resident members of the program, and over 6,600 trips have been taken on the system. To-date, staff has received 45 pieces of public feedback directly, while car2go has received an additional 50 unique communications. All requests received for vehicle relocations were addressed by car2go. However, when membership uptake and vehicle use in the first months (November-December) was lower than anticipated, car2go responded in January by reducing the fleet size in order to address operational cost issues. With a much smaller fleet, relocation calls quickly tapered to near zero, and the per-vehicle efficiency of the system increased, but there is also overall less usefulness to members. Membership continues to grow, but the current fleet service level is not a good solution for a long-term program. Staff is working actively with car2go to identify operational adjustments to the demonstration that will allow them to increase the fleet level again, and in turn offer a more robust program for staff and community members to experience and evaluate.

car2go Areas of Compliance

Vehicle Identification	car2go provided a monthly update on the license plate list (total of four lists with 96/95/24/25 cars)
Vehicle Registration	All vehicles are registered and licensed in Arlington County.
Emission Standards	All vehicles are Daimler Smart ForTwo cars and meet the EPA SmartWay emission standards (rating: 36 mpg)
Maintenance	The service operator is providing the proper maintenance of their fleet vehicles. Vehicle battery issues in December due to cold weather were addressed.
Home Zone	car2go is operating their demonstration study fleet within Arlington County only. A few vehicles were driven to Washington, DC during the rollout of service, and were promptly relocated and members informed of the service's home zone area and its relationship with the DC home zone area.
Parking and Traffic Laws	car2go provides information on parking regulation to their members. Since the start of the program, car2go fleet vehicles have received a total of 21 parking tickets and one red light violation ticket.
Advertising	Car2go has not advertised or published Arlington County government's promotional materials without the County's consent.
Penalties and Fines	car2go has taken financial responsibility for all fines and enforcement actions.
Communications Plan (car2go Role)	<p>car2go deployed street teams at the start of the program as well as during events in the fall, such as farmers markets, to speak with community members about the service and operation procedures and to answer any questions about the program. Other outreach efforts included a digital campaign which involved Instagram, Facebook, Retail Me Not, Thrillest, Do stuff, and Twitter, a discount "Hop In" campaign, and an e-mail campaign and referral program.</p> <p>car2go has joined Arlington County staff in speaking at six Civic Association meetings upon the Civic Association's request, as well as reached out to Business Improvement Districts to seek partnerships. Presentations have been conducted at the following Civic Associations: Aurora Highlands, Donaldson Run, Ballston/Virginia Square, Barcroft, Clarendon-Courthouse, and Foxcroft Heights. car2go vehicles are displaying the required demonstration study decal.</p>
Program Status Update Meetings	County staff and car2go have been meeting on a monthly basis to discuss and assess the program, and communicate via email and phone on an as-needed basis to address residents' requests or organizational issues.
Data and Reporting (Survey Data):	car2go recently closed the first Arlington member survey and delivered preliminary data.

Program Key Challenges

Vehicle Fleet: car2go introduced 96 cars within the first four weeks of the demonstration study. However, instead of further increasing this number, car2go reduced the number to 24 in January, 2016, after informing Arlington County staff that this action would be taken due to lower than expected use and higher than expected operating costs. This fleet level is far short of the commitment made in the agreement, and makes it more difficult to evaluate usefulness and impacts.

System Management and Rebalancing: car2go staff have resolved 100% of requests to move vehicles. These requests reported vehicles having longer-than-permitted idle times in one location (24 hours in RPP zones, 36 hours in metered locations). Staff and car2go received a total of 75 requests that had some element of relocation desired. In a minority of these cases, cars were not actually in-excess of their idle time limits, but they were moved nonetheless. Requests for relocations have all but disappeared since the fleet was reduced in January.

Data Highlights

Staff has documented 45 instances of public feedback regarding the car2go service, received from residents via phone, email, and the County website comment section. The data was combined with the car2go records of which the total amount of feedback amounts to 95 occurrences. Input thus far from the community can be grouped roughly into three categories: concerns about the vehicles being parked on neighborhood streets (mostly received via phone call or email), appreciation for the new transportation option (mostly received via email or web form), and general curiosity about how the service works, and whether it may be of use to them (mostly received as feedback in person at civic association presentations).

As of March 2016, 1,963 Arlington residents are members of the car2go service. To-date, 6,607 trips have been taken with the new service in Arlington, of which 68% are member trips. The other 32% of trips have been service trips. Most of these have been relocating cars, which staff attributes to membership growth and per-member vehicle utilization being lower than anticipated by car2go. However, this share also include routine maintenance trips which are part of the service model. Average member trips per vehicle per month doubled when the fleet size was reduced in January, making each car more active, and resulting in fewer relocation requests. However, this fleet reduction also resulted in lower member usage overall, as well as questions about service levels from existing members.

Overall, car2go has provided about two-thirds of the system data required by the agreement. The first member survey was completed in February, the results of which will be used in conjunction with follow up surveys in the final program evaluation. Parking duration data has been provided in an ongoing way as a part of resolving relocation requests, but more comprehensive parking duration data systemwide is forthcoming.

County Communications Tools

A demonstration study webpage is housed on the arlingtonva.us website: transportation.arlingtonva.us/parking/car2go/. The page includes a comment section which has been used by residents for feedback. A carsharing@arlingtonva.us email address was set up and is displayed on all communications relating to the demonstration study; it is also used by residents to provide feedback. All facts about the study have been included on the webpage as well as responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs). This information has been distributed at Civic Association meetings and upon request to residents. A press release about the study was published through the official County channels. The commuterpage.com and carfreediet.com websites provide crosslinks to the demonstration study page as well as to the car2go website. Social media promotion has taken place in the beginning through TE&O and ACCS Facebook, Twitter, and ACCS programs that interface with the community provide information about this service.

Next Steps

Staff is actively working with car2go to identify feasible operational adjustments to decrease idle times in some areas and to enhance the overall usefulness of the service to community members, particularly as an alternative to personal vehicle use, as a connection to economic and job opportunities, and as a connection to transit. Improvements being considered include enhanced outreach, education, and promotion about the service, and modifications to the fleet make-up to include four-door vehicles, which have been requested by some users and interested community members. Also being explored is the feasibility of providing cross-jurisdictional point-to-point service with the District of Columbia. Based on early feedback from members, there is the potential for this modification to make point-to-point carsharing more attractive to Arlington residents and workers, and a more useful program would to help each vehicle operate more efficiently. Suggestions have noted that this service could supplement the low transit service levels seen during late evenings and weekends for cross-jurisdictional trips. Discussions about the feasibility of these operational improvements are ongoing with car2go and with the District.

Staff continues to monitor the program, and consistent with the original agreement, proposes to evaluate program performance after a full 12 months of operation.