

## OP-ED

### New car-sharing program could put charge into NYC's electric-vehicle use

Residents of two Manhattan buildings have a fleet of BMWs to share—an amenity other properties should consider

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Electric vehicles would seem to be a natural fit for New York City. They are emission-free, virtually silent and never need to visit gas stations, which have virtually disappeared from Manhattan. EVs are also ideal for short trips.

But they have not taken off here because they cost more than conventional vehicles, parking is difficult and there are few publicly accessible charging stations. The city is currently grappling with how to install such stations curbside, but inserting infrastructure in tight urban spaces with overlapping departmental jurisdictions takes a while.

A new car-sharing model that recently launched in New York City, however, could put these cars within reach of more people. Residents of two apartment buildings in lower Manhattan now have at their disposal a fleet of BMWs, the majority of which are electric. This pilot program with residential EV car sharing—created by ReachNow, BMW's premium mobility service—is the first of its kind in North America.

As the planning and policy analysts working with BMW Group, we believe this new residentially based EV car-sharing model has the potential to significantly mitigate emissions and congestion in New York and other metro areas.

Reducing emissions and congestion by discouraging the use of personal vehicles has been a policy goal for successive New York City administrations. But even in a dense metropolis with better than average mass transit, nudging private car ownership downward is challenging. The question is, how to entice people who own cars to switch to compact EVs, and perhaps relinquish private car ownership altogether?

Residential-based EV car sharing greatly increases convenience for both electric-vehicle usage and car sharing as a primary form of automobile travel. Why? The EVs are parked and charged onsite. This is a huge advantage. Because residential EV car sharing is not dependent on the rollout of public infrastructure, this model can be expanded quickly.

Mayor Bill de Blasio recently announced that the city is dedicating parking spaces for shared vehicles. We applaud this effort. To encourage residential-based EV car sharing, however, New York and other municipalities might consider incentivizing developers to offer emission-free cars on demand in new multi-family buildings. This could be done by reducing parking requirements, which saves on construction costs.

This model isn't just for luxury apartment buildings or dense urban areas. We also see the potential for EV car sharing in new affordable housing projects by incentivizing developers with density bonuses. In suburban areas such as Westchester County, for example, affordable housing and public transportation are in short supply. Incorporating EV car sharing into new affordable developments could be incentivized with property tax breaks while helping low-income families that can't afford to own two cars, or even one.

Given our traffic congestion issues and that transportation accounts for an average of 35% of greenhouse-gas emissions in most metro areas, increasing EV usage and car sharing are significant steps in the right direction. New York City is the obvious place to test this idea, which we believe has great potential to transform mobility in metro regions across the country.