

# Sharing the road in electric cars

## A look at car sharing service Wellington's Mevo

Less expensive than owning a car and more convenient than renting or leasing, car-sharing services like Wellington's Mevo also offer a more environmentally-friendly driving experience than car ownership.

Mevo currently has six plug-in hybrid electric cars on the road in Wellington and is looking to expand its fleet to 50 by the end of this year, after receiving funding from the government's Low Emission Vehicles Contestable Fund. The fund provides up to 50 per cent funding for projects that encourage and support the uptake of electric vehicles and other low emission vehicles on public roads and that make use of New Zealand's renewable electricity advantage.

Mevo is the first car sharing service in New Zealand to only use plug-in hybrid electric cars. The company's co-founder and chief executive, Erik Zydervelt, says using electric

cars is a way to begin to turn consumerism on its head. "So instead of every action taken by a consumer leaving the environment a little bit worse off, make each action leave the environment a little bit better off. That is going to start turning things around quite quickly, when you add up all of those small actions taken every minute of the day across the planet."

Zydervelt acknowledges that environmental concerns aren't at the front of every consumer's mind, but believes people will go for a green option if they are offered a quality service. "If we're thinking about getting people to make a change, the change needs to be to something better than what they currently have. "With that in mind, Mevo opted for a plug-in hybrid electric car with a luxurious bent - the Audi A3 Sportback, which was named World Car of the Year in 2014. "The aspect of having a beautiful car adds to the future we want to live in where things are better not worse."

Plug-in hybrids were chosen over pure electric cars to give clients the option of long-distance driving as well as smaller around-town trips. "More than 90 per cent of our

trips are pure electric, but our members can still drive the distance of Auckland to Westport without stopping," says Zydervelt. Customers sign up to Mevo as members and there is currently a waiting list to join. Zydervelt says the company has to balance the size of its membership with the number of cars it has available, to make sure supply can meet demand. "We have enough customers to keep our cars spinning while making sure our members always have a car available when they need one at the last minute for a meeting, errand, date or ski trip."

An app allows customers to do everything from checking vehicle availability, to booking a car and even unlocking it. Customers pick up a car from one of Mevo's dedicated car parks, which it calls pods. Each pod is equipped with chargers, which the cars are plugged into between trips. Mevo currently has two pods, one at Clyde Quay and one at Queen's Wharf, but by the end of this year this will grow to 17 spots around Wellington, to cope with its expanding fleet. Inner-city residents and businesses are the company's core targets, but Zydervelt says there's also been a strong take-up by customers who live in Wellington's outer suburbs.

"They commute into town via public transport and then use Mevo vehicles to run errands during the day."

For customer Chris Rowe, a director at building engineering services firm COR Associates, Mevo's plug-in hybrid electric cars were a drawcard. "We wanted to get into electric motoring for environmental reasons. We want to make our company as sustainable as possible, and eliminating or reducing petrol consumption is one way of doing that." He says the service is cost-effective compared to buying a car. "Nearly all of our driving is on business, and so we are treating this as a normal business expense."



Chris Rowe, from COR Associates, in Wellington who uses car sharing service Mevo for business meetings

Prices vary depending on usage, and customers can choose from a three-tier pricing structure, which caters for occasional, regular and frequent users. "We have members who'll regularly use Mevo twice a week, or more, for between one or three hours, while other members we'll only see once or twice a month but will pick up a car on a Friday night and not return it until Sunday." Generally, people spend a month or so on the pay-as-you-go plan, while they work out how much they'll use the service. "From there, over a third of our members will upgrade to a higher use plan."

Car-sharing services using electric vehicles are the first step in what could be a transport revolution. A recent report by independent US think tank RethinkX says, "We are on the cusp of one of the fastest, deepest, most consequential disruptions of transportation in history."

The report says that individual vehicle ownership, especially of traditional petrol cars, "will enter a vicious cycle of increasing costs, decreasing convenience and diminishing quality of service".

It predicts that once legislation for automated driving is passed in the US, change will be rapid, and by 2030, 95% of US car travel will be in autonomous, electric, shared vehicles.

Erik Zydervelt, Mevo Chief Executive and co-founder, Finn Lawrence



“ We are on the cusp of one of the fastest, deepest, most consequential disruptions of transportation in history. ”

- RethinkX

Although he had initial concerns about availability of vehicles and was worried that cars might not always be free on short notice, he's always managed to get a car whenever he's wanted. The only inconvenience compared to owning is having to walk to Mevo's nearest pod. "It would be more convenient to have

a pod of Mevo cars closer, but we are willing to walk a short distance." Apart from the environmental benefits, there are also financial payoffs.

Mevo estimates that car-sharing could save drivers more than \$5,000 a year compared to costs

incurred through traditional car ownership, such as insurance, WOF, registration, maintenance and petrol. "Based on the normal use you can put about half of what you would spend on owning a car into more holidays, your mortgage or smashed avocado if you so desire," says Erik Zydervelt.

If you want to find out more about electric vehicles visit [electricvehicles.govt.nz](http://electricvehicles.govt.nz)