

Innovative ride-sharing service to debut in Arvin and Wasco this week

By Sam Morgen

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A transportation revolution could be underway in Wasco and Arvin.

Both cities will be part of Miocar, a new service that will allow residents to quickly rent electric cars for short periods of time through a smartphone app.

The service is meant to provide options for residents of those cities who don't have easy access to transportation, and it will also reduce the amount of polluting vehicles that are used in the Central Valley.

"Whether you are a parent who uses the only car for work, leaving the rest of the family in need of a second vehicle during the day, or if you don't own a vehicle and need one for an out-of-town appointment, this service can help," Abigail Solis, Senior Community Development Specialist for Self Help Enterprises, said in a news release "We are excited to provide rural community residents with another option to meet their transportation needs."

Funded through a California Air Resource Board Grant, Miocar has already launched in several Central Valley cities and is scheduled for more launches this week.

Wasco Mayor Alex Garcia said the name of the service emerged from a focus group held by program organizers earlier this summer.

"We haven't had car sharing or any kind of ridesharing for Wasco at all, so this will be the first of its kind," he said. "As soon as (people) get the hang of it, I'm sure they are going to really love the idea."

A pre-launch event has been scheduled for Wasco and Arvin this week, with Orosi, Dinuba and Visalia already hosting their own launch activities.

"It's certainly welcome," said Arvin Mayor Jose Gurrola. "There's a significant population that has mobility issues in terms of having their own vehicle. There's a lot of carpooling that goes on, either to the work or to the fields, and so this is certainly going to be a big help to the community."

The app is currently available, and anyone wanting to use the service will need to download it to gain access to the vehicles.

The service will charge a \$20 registration fee, and users will need to have a drivers license in order to use the app.

Rates of \$4 per hour, \$35 per weekday and \$45 for days on weekends will generally be charged.

The electric vehicles will be parked at charging stations throughout the cities for use.

Miocar should be available after the launch ceremonies in each city.

Wasco's launch ceremony will be held at 7 p.m., Thursday, at 1500 Poplar Ave.

Arvin's launch ceremony will be held at 7 p.m., Friday, at 909 Meyer St.

Residents are invited to attend to learn more about the program and preview the vehicles as well as sign up for free driving credits.

Family activities and refreshments will be provided.