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SAN FRANCISCO CITY CARSHARE PLANS ELECTRIC BIKESHARE

Car-sharing is considered an environmentally friendly transit option, but in San Francisco there could soon be an even greener option than the signature Prius: electric bikes.

Ninety electric bikes — bicycles with motors to assist with heavy loads or steep hills — are slated for 25 City CarShare stations across San Francisco and Berkeley as early as January.

While electric bikes aren't a common sight on the road, they have a greater presence in bike-friendly San Francisco than in any other Bay Area city, said Dedrick Roper, City CarShare's electric bike-share project manager.

"There are a lot of bike lanes and electric bikes also help you cut through wind and flatten out hills," said Roper, who uses an electric bike as part of his commute. "They accommodate people who haven't been able to ride bikes due to physical illness or the terrain."

Reserving an electric bike would be anywhere from 40 to 70 percent cheaper than a vehicle, added City CarShare CEO Rick Hutchinson.

Incorporating an electric bike fleet has been delayed for a couple of years due to roadblocks to grant funding and reaching an agreement with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. The

program would cost about \$2 million over three years, so the local transit agency's role in administering a \$740,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration is critical, Hutchinson said.

"The Federal Highway Administration funds a certain amount of research and environmental and roadwork programs, and we fully expect this will reduce the demands on parking and vehicle miles traveled," he said. "MTA has been a huge supporter of this and I can't imagine why anybody would oppose something like this."

If the transit agency's board of directors approves the grant spending today, the program would be on the road to rollout here and in Berkeley.

City CarShare is partnering with UC Berkeley's Transportation Sustainability Research Center, which will conduct a study over three years on the electric bike-sharing program and release best practices to other municipalities.

"Hopefully we'll have a successful program that will benefit other communities as well," Hutchinson said.

He added that the nonprofit's mission to reduce carbon dioxide emissions with electric bike sharing goes hand in hand with a bike-sharing pilot program that will launch in the Bay Area on Aug. 29, including in The City.

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