

Drive Mercedes for cents

STORY AND PHOTO BY COLLIN BEREND



Cars are expensive and require much maintenance depending on how old they are. Sometimes finding a spot to park in Portland is expensive. That's where car2go comes in.

Car2go, with 2.3 million members, is currently the largest car sharing company in the world. For membership, they require your license number and credit card information. With your smartphone, you can track a car and unlock it, renting it until you end the trip. You're charged by the minute.

Currently, the Smart Fortwo costs 41 cents per minute. So, depending on how long you think you'll be driving, that's not bad. For me, it's cheaper than Uber.

I drive to Portland at least once a month. I can take a car from Sellwood and get to Portland State with only a cost of \$9-11 on average.

"With car2go, members can enjoy the freedom of car ownership without the associated costs and responsibilities of ownership," said Dacyl Armendariz, the communications manager for car2go in an email.

The Smart Fortwo has only two seats and a trunk for your basic needs, not best for large trips to the grocery store. But they do have some cars that have bike racks, so if you need one and your tire's popped, well, now you have a ride.

What if you don't want a Smart car? Maybe you want something that's more sophisticated. Then use your phone to locate and rent a new 2017 Mercedes-Benz. There are only two types, the GLA and the CLA.

The 2017 Mercedes-Benz CLA is a four-door sedan. It's slick, comfortable, new and has seat heaters to toast those buns. For a sedan, it's spacy, and looks fancy. Since it's new, be sure to learn how it works first.

Then there's the Mercedes-Benz GLA, which is a compact SUV. Compared to the CLA, the room isn't that much different, except for the trunk, which is bigger. And yes, it also has bum warmers. Three level settings, for those curious.

Both cars allow you to hook your phone

up and listen to music, make calls, use personal navigation with previous locations you've mapped and more. The control is all at the steering wheel. But how much are they?

Both Mercedes-Benz vehicles can be rented at the same rate as the Smart Fortwo, a mere 41 cents per minute.

"Car2go is a great option for anyone with mobility needs, and we see that reflected in our wide range of members," said Armendariz. "In Portland, the majority of our members are between 25-35 years old and are split evenly male/female."

To use a car2go rental, you must be within the home area, a highlighted part of the map. Outside of the home area is where the map is hazed by white. You can drive outside the home area, but you cannot park or end the trip outside of it.

There are car2go parking spaces outside of home areas, such as at Portland International Airport and some areas which have small home areas. Portland Community College is one of them.

With car2go, meter parking is free of charge with the caveat being it must be a two hour or more spot, if you're done renting. You risk it being towed otherwise, and you'll be responsible.

"We would like to meet with Clackamas

Community College to see if they would allow car2go parking in their lot," said Armendariz. "We would also need to develop a forecast of how often our service would be used at the campus.

"Car2go provides students with a cost effective, flexible transportation option. For just [41] cents per minute - completely free from surge pricing - students have access to our fleet of smart cars, Mercedes GLA, and CLA vehicles including fuel, parking, insurance and maintenance," said Armendariz when asked about how it would benefit students.

"... enjoy the freedom of car ownership without the associated costs ..."
— Dacyl Armendariz

For many students and staff, the use of a car2go would be most useful. What if your car is in the shop, you don't have one or a shared car is being used? Being able to drive a car2go anywhere from Portland to Oregon City would be a benefit. And this is why Oregon City and Clackamas Community College should become home areas.



A Smart Fortwo waits for a new driver.

ON THE COVER: Photos by Alexis Wagar, Collin Berend, Doug Fry, and Sam Weston. Cover design by Chelsea Pagan.

CORRECTION: In the Feb. 15 issue of the Clackamas Print, Katie Kammerer's name was misspelled. The Print regrets the error.

Most Trafficked Story This Week: Ten ways to reduce stress by Kristen Wohlers

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