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Wednesday, October 25, 2017 ☀️ 19°C [Forecast]

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Tuesday, October 24, 2017, 13:09 by [Philip Leone Ganado](#)

Ditch your car and rent one as needed

National car sharing system launched



Video: Matthew Mirabelli

Open an app, find an available car near you, drive it to your destination, leave it in any of a number of reserved parking space around the island, and carry on with your day.

The operators of a new national car sharing system – GoTo – are hoping the convenience and potential savings could entice car users to ditch their personal vehicles in favour of a new approach.

Announced today by transport minister Ian Borg and Gil Laser, CEO of Israeli company Car2Go, the system will launch soon with a fleet of 150 electric cars, supported by 225 new charging pillars and 450 designated parking spaces as part of an €8 million investment.

Customers will pay a €7 monthly membership fee and then 28c per minute of drive time. Members will be able to use cars in any of the nine cities the company currently operates.

The company suggests that families could save €3,800 annually compared to owning a private car, which currently accounts for an average of 18 per cent of a person's monthly spending.

“The sharing economy concept is catching on everywhere,” Dr Borg said. “These vehicles will not be used by a single driver throughout the day, and left idle the rest of the time. Hopefully this can help to reduce our dependency on private cars.”

Dr Borg also said the new fleet would help Malta achieve its target of 5,000 electric vehicles on the road by 2020. There are currently only 167 battery-powered passenger cars in the country, yet the minister said he was confident the target could still be reached, highlighting existing grant schemes and increasing technology and choice from manufacturers.

Car2Go CEO Mr Laser said car-sharing would help reduce traffic on the road by shifting people to alternative transport, using their car only for specific journeys rather than all the time.

“Most people spend a lot of money to use their car for maybe an hour a day,” he said. “We can give you the same experience of driving a comfortable electric car and pay only by the minute. In other cities, we've seen that many families are ready to give up a second car and use this service.”

Globally, the car-sharing market comprised 5.8 million users and 86,000 cars at the end of 2015, and is projected to increase to 35 million users and 510,000 cars by 2021.

Its introduction in Malta follows the setting-up of a bicycle sharing system, Nextbike, late last year, which operates on a similar model with users picking up a bike from one docking station and depositing it at another.