



Neighborhood Energy Connection
tools for energy-efficient living

Home Energy
Energy Improvement Financing
HOURCAR
Saint Paul Classic Bike Tour

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For Immediate Release

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NEW SOLAR HUBS SPARK A WORLD'S FIRST FOR TWIN CITIES CAR-SHARING SERVICE, HOURCAR

Plug-in hybrid HOURCARs enable zero-emissions driving powered by renewable solar energy

Saint Paul, MN--October 22, 2008— HOURCAR, a Twin Cities-based car-sharing organization, has announced that its two plug-in hybrid vehicles will now be powered by the sun. HOURCAR, a program of the nonprofit Neighborhood Energy Connection (NEC), is the first car-sharing operator in the world to offer solar-powered recharging. Solar-powered recharging stations will provide electricity to HOURCAR hubs located at Saint Paul's Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-Op and Minneapolis' 46th Street Hiawatha light rail station. Each solar charge will provide enough emissions-free electricity to power the vehicles for trips of 30 to 40 miles.

"The future of transportation is here," said Chris Duffrin, NEC Executive Director. "We all know gasoline is expensive, and its carbon dioxide emissions are no longer acceptable. Pairing solar panels with electric cars is the clean, smart, and increasingly affordable way to go—especially with the inherent efficiencies of car sharing, where car ownership expenses are spread across hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of users."

HOURCAR members, who number more than 650 in the Twin Cities, connect the plug-in hybrid Toyota Priuses to standard 120V electric outlets when the cars are parked in their dedicated parking spots. When the cars are on the road, the 2kW grid-connected solar systems supply electricity to their host sites.

"There's no downside to our HOURCAR partnership," said Gail Graham, General Manager of Mississippi Market, which has dedicated a permanent parking space to the car-sharing group and allowed HOURCAR to install a solar system on the roof of its Selby Avenue store. "Our customers appreciate the convenience of having a car

available to them when they shop, and now our store will also be partially powered by renewable energy.”

The solar systems were made possible by a grant from the Office of Energy Security, a division of the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

HOURCAR operates 16 low-emissions vehicles in hubs throughout Minneapolis and Saint Paul. HOURCAR plans to expand its fleet to 26 vehicles in 2009 by partnering with hub sponsors who partially subsidize the cost of a new car.

More information is available at www.HOURCAR.org.

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About HOURCAR

HOURCAR is a program of the nonprofit Neighborhood Energy Connection. HOURCAR was founded in 2005 to provide an alternative to car ownership in the Twin Cities. In customer surveys, HOURCAR members report reduced carbon dioxide emissions, a high level of customer satisfaction, and savings. More information about HOURCAR is available at www.HOURCAR.org.

About the Neighborhood Energy Connection

The Neighborhood Energy Connection (NEC) is a Saint Paul-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to reduce pollution, conserve resources, and improve quality of life by offering tools for energy-efficient living. In addition to operating HOURCAR, the NEC provides residential energy audits and home energy improvement loans across Minnesota. More information on the NEC is available at www.TheNEC.org.

About Mississippi Market

Consumer owned and operated since 1979, Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-op is St. Paul's premier destination for natural foods and health products. Mississippi Market is an institution where like-minded families and individuals can come together and celebrate the joy of eating locally, healthily and responsibly. Mississippi Market is a Certified Organic Retail Operation that strives to provide high quality, fair-priced goods and services, promote cooperative principles, and work toward a sustainable local economy and global environment.