

## TECHNOLOGY

# Share a cab? Uber's carpool option, uberPOOL, has now served 'millions'

Last August, Uber introduced its cab-sharing service uberPOOL, which it claims has been popular and environmentally friendly.

By **Tess Danielson**, Staff Writer | APRIL 17, 2015



Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters/File Photo [View Caption](#)

Uber's [public image](#) has taken a [beating](#) recently, but business is still roaring.

Back in [August](#), Uber introduced the cab-sharing service called uberPOOL, which allows for those in select cities to split their cab fare with strangers headed in the same direction. After uberPOOL turned six months old, Uber decided to breakdown a month's worth of data to see exactly how many people were sharing its cabs.

According to the [Uber blog](#), millions have hopped in cabs together in San Francisco, Paris, New York, and Los Angeles. The post claims that thousands of users take “POOL trips during commute hours more than five times in a week.” Uber additionally says those who decided to split a cab during commuting hours in highly populated areas of San Francisco saw match rates at “over 90 percent.”

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Uber claims the millions of shared rides have also cut down on pollution. By Uber’s calculations, San Franciscans who used the service saved an estimated 674,000 miles for drivers from February 20th to March 20th. The post went on to say, “assuming that every SF uberX vehicle is a Toyota Prius — thus getting its gas mileage of [50 mpg](#) — uberPOOL trips saved around 13,500 gasoline gallons.” This translates, by Uber’s estimates, into the preventions of about 120 metric tons of CO2 emissions from being released into the atmosphere. (For the record, uberX vehicles include a mixture of hybrid and mid-range cars, so the real numbers would be somewhat lower.)

“The feedback we've received from riders has been overwhelmingly positive. We’ve heard some great stories from our riders about their POOL experiences,” an Uber representative says via e-mail. "One couple reached out to us to let us know they got engaged a few months after meeting in an uberPOOL. Others have received job offers and connected with long-lost friends."



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While Uber claims it has saved the “[equivalent to the output of over 128,000 pounds of coal](#),” there are a few holes in the data currently. Besides the fact that not all Uber drivers drive Prius cars, the figures do not account for how uberPOOL users got around before, whether that be through public transit or using a personal car, which could skew the numbers.

As [Re/code](#) points out, “We can’t accurately measure carpooling’s environmental impact without understanding what it’s replacing.”

Though Uber is not currently releasing more details about the data, it does have plans to research uberPOOL’s overall transportation impact more thoroughly, which includes measuring “the impact of uberPOOL on transportation patterns overall in cities.”

As cab sharing becomes more mainstream, with companies such as [Lyft](#) and [Maxxi](#) expanding into this aspect of the sharing economy, it certainly doesn’t hurt to have fewer cars on the road. Carlo Ratti, director of [MIT Senseable City Laboratory](#), believes this could be a drastic change for how the world gets around.

“Cars are idle 95% of the time, so they are an ideal candidate for the sharing economy. It has been estimated that every shared car can remove [approximately] 10-30 privately owned cars from the street,” says Mr. Ratti via e-mail. “Also, the impact of car sharing will grow exponentially with the advent of self driving. Self-driving vehicles promise to have a dramatic impact on urban life, because they will blur the distinction between private and public modes of transportation.”



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“ 'Your' car could give you a lift to work in the morning and then, rather than sitting idle in a parking lot, give a lift to someone else in your family – or, for that matter, to anyone else in your neighborhood, social-media community, or city,” added Ratti.

Uber is not currently revealing which locations will be added to the uberPOOL roster, but the company told The Monitor we should expect to see the product in more cities “over the coming months.”

While consumers have enjoyed cheaper taxi fare, cab sharing could have the potential to make a dent Uber’s profits, a concern which does not appear to be worrying the company. In fact, Uber has been experimenting with promotions such as flat-rate fares in Los Angeles and San Francisco for \$5 or \$7.

“Our mission is a world where access to safe and affordable transportation is as reliable as running water,” Uber says in its e-mail to the Monitor.

“With lower prices and more shared rides, we believe people can move past car ownership as taking Uber becomes less expensive than owning a vehicle. Fewer cars on the road means fewer emissions, less congestion and more time for people to spend connecting with cities and communities in new ways.”