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Volume 32, 2012 - [Issue 1](#)

6,583 493

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# Ridesharing in North America: Past, Present, and Future

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Pages 93-112 | Received 24 Feb 2011, Accepted 05 Sep 2011, Published online: 04 Nov 2011

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2011.621557>

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## Abstract

Since the late 1990s, numerous ridematching programmes have integrated the Internet, mobile phones, and social networking into their services. Online ridematching systems are employing a range of new strategies to create “critical mass”: (1) regional and large employer partnerships, (2) financial incentives, (3) social networking to younger populations, and (4) real-time ridematching services that employ “smartphones” and automated ridematching software. Enhanced casual carpooling approaches, which focus on “meeting places”, are also being explored. Today, ridesharing represents approximately 8–11% of the transportation modal share in Canada and the USA, respectively. There are approximately 638 ridematching programmes in North America. Ridesharing's evolution can be categorized into five phases: (1) World War II car-sharing (or carpooling) clubs; (2) major responses to the 1970s energy crises; (3) early organized ridesharing schemes; (4) reliable ridesharing

systems; and (5) technology-enabled ridematching. While ridesharing's future growth and direction are uncertain, the next decade is likely to include greater interoperability among services, technology integration, and stronger policy support. In light of growing concerns about climate change, congestion, and oil dependency, more research is needed to better understand ridesharing's impacts on infrastructure, congestion, and energy/emissions.

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## Acknowledgements

The Transportation Sustainability Research Center (TSRC) at the University of California, Berkeley and the Honda Motor Company, through its endowment for new mobility studies at the University of California, Davis, generously funded this research. The authors thank Madonna Camel and Steven Chua of TSRC for their help in questionnaire development. The authors also acknowledge Andrew Amey, Cindy Burbank, Mark Evanoff, Allen Greenberg, David Lively, Paul Minett, Marc Oliphant, Lew Pratsch, Sean O'Sullivan, Syd Pawlowski, Rick Steele, Phil Winters, Park Woodworth, and John Zimmer for their expert interviews. The contents of this paper reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily indicate acceptance by the sponsors.

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