

CARS FOR NEIGHBORS COMPLETES 100 REPAIRS THROUGH PROJECT CAR

by Sebastian Wells / June 1, 2022



Did you know in Minnesota it is estimated that 25% of cars, trucks, and other passenger vehicles cause 90% of vehicle pollution? Environmental

Initiative has been working with local car repair programs and shops to fix outdated or broken emission control systems and exhaust equipment in cars since 2017.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Joe McKenzie, Director of Philanthropic Partnerships, and Anna Weingart, Administrative Coordinator, at Cars for Neighbors about this work.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN PROJECT CAR?

Cars for Neighbors was a part of the Environmental Initiative's pilot program for Project CAR in 2017. We conducted emissions repairs on 25 vehicles over a six-month period during the initial pilot. It was an opportunity for Cars for Neighbors to figure out how emissions repairs could be completed alongside other vehicle repairs. In January 2020, we were contacted by Bill Droessler and Gillian Greenberg to discuss our participation in Project CAR going forward as more sustained funding for the project had been secured. We have been completing emissions repairs on our clients' vehicles since the end of March 2020.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED FROM WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROJECT CAR?

We didn't realize how many harmful toxins are released into the air with broken or malfunctioning emissions systems. We were surprised by the amount of VOCs and Nitrogen Oxides that have been removed from the air in Anoka County through our partnership and the repairs completed on our clients' vehicles. The overall impact that catalytic converters, oxygen sensors, EGR valves, and the evaporative emissions control systems have on gas mileage and fuel efficiency were a huge eye opener for us as well. There is limited public transportation in Anoka County and having a personal vehicle is needed to complete day-to-day activities, so the impact on air quality is significant and the improvements in fuel efficiency positively impact our clients.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING INVOLVED IN PROJECT CAR?

According to a [MN DEED study](#), Anoka County residents have longer average commute times compared to the rest of the State. Our involvement with Project CAR helps rid the air of harmful emissions during these long commutes as well as improves the fuel efficiency of our clients' vehicles.

DO YOU HAVE ANY STORIES TO SHARE FROM WORKING WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS THROUGH PROJECT CAR?

Since our partnership with Project CAR began in March 2020, one out of four vehicles that we do emissions repairs on belongs to someone who receives services from one of our Anoka County community nonprofit partners that include Alexandra House, Family Promise in Anoka County, Stepping Stone Emergency Housing, and The Dwelling Place. So, the program is helping those who might not have these repairs completed otherwise.

HOW DOES THE PROCESS OF DOING A REPAIR THROUGH PROJECT CAR WORK AT CARS FOR NEIGHBORS?

Our vehicle repair program focuses on critical safety repairs. Every client vehicle comes to our trusted partner, Meineke Car Care Center in Ham Lake, and receives a comprehensive vehicle inspection to determine what repairs are needed for the vehicle safety-wise. Through our partnership with Project CAR, we are able to address and complete emissions repairs that may not have been a priority compared to other issues on older vehicles in Anoka County.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT CARS FOR NEIGHBORS OR PROJECT CAR?

Anoka County is the fourth largest county in Minnesota. There are many rural areas in the county that don't have easy access to grocery stores, schools, medical appointments, and other services. There are limited public transportation options in these areas so having a working personal vehicle is a necessity for many residents. Anoka County workers also have some of the longest commutes to work. The Cars for Neighbors' vehicle repair program helps drive the economic mobility, opportunity, and empowerment of Anoka County residents.

This project is supported by grant funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, City of Minneapolis, and Flint Hills Resources. Sincere thanks to these partners for supporting this important emission reduction and equity work. [Contact Bill Droessler](#) to learn more about supporting Project CAR financially.