

# REDUCING VEHICLE EMISSIONS AT NO COST TO RESIDENTS

by Sebastian Wells and Natalie Rademacher December 8, 2022



Cars for Neighbors recently hit a big milestone, reducing more than six tons of volatile organic compounds and nitrous oxide emissions by repairing vehicle emission systems. The organization, which provides car care for low-income Anoka County residents who may be burdened by repair expenses, partners with Environmental Initiative to fix emission systems at no cost to the vehicle owner. Through this partnership, Cars for Neighbors is reducing emissions without putting a burden on residents.

Environmental Initiative raises funds from the private sector, local government, and state government to pay for these repairs, and then funnels the money to Cars for Neighbors and the other partner garages. When a car comes into the shop, the emissions systems can be checked and if repairs are needed, they can be completed alongside the other repairs. More than 120 vehicles brought into Cars for Neighbors have had emissions-related repairs thanks to the partnership.

Joe McKenzie, Director of Philanthropic Partnerships at Cars for Neighbors, said this work is meaningful to him because these repairs have a ripple effect.

“With this partnership, we are reducing the economic burden of car repairs and are improving air quality in the community,” he said. “We are giving the vehicle owner more economic opportunity and mobility today, while working to make the community better for all residents. It’s a win-win.”

Emission system repairs can provide lasting economic benefits for the vehicle owner. Oxygen sensor repairs, which make up most of the emissions-related work Cars for Neighbors does, can improve the fuel economy of a vehicle by up to 40%.

About 88% of people use a car, truck, or van to get to work in Anoka County, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. It can be challenging getting from place to place in Anoka County without a personal vehicle due to limited public transportation and its size — it’s the 4th largest county in Minnesota. For McKenzie, repairing vehicles is about ensuring residents can continue to stay connected to their community and move forward in their lives and careers.

“Our neighbors who are most impacted by pollution are often those struggling day-to-day to meet their own needs and the needs of their families. Project CAR is a powerful tool for providing community solutions to economic and environmental problems simultaneously,” said Mike Harley, executive director for Environmental Initiative. “We are honored to work with Cars for Neighbors and our other community partners to help those most in need financially while advancing toward clean air everywhere and for all people.”

*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.*