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WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 235

September 15, 2015

Good afternoon, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 235, which relates to the parking of motor vehicles owned by carsharing organizations.

Carsharing organizations, for those who are not familiar, are relatively new companies that employ a more modern transportation alternative to classic automobile ownership. Representatives from one company, Car2Go, are present today and should be able to answer any questions you may have regarding their operations, but the idea is fairly straightforward.

These companies essentially act as a membership service, wherein members share automobiles and are billed for the use of the car on the basis of trip, distance traveled or trip duration. A typical member will use his or her smart phone to find an available car, travel as needed, and leave the vehicle in an appropriate parking spot for the next user to later retrieve.

Most of us are familiar with parking regulations implemented in most municipalities. In some areas, parking may be restricted to an hour or two-hour limit, while other locations may require an hourly fee. For some carsharing organizations, like Car2Go, establishing parking agreements with local authorities is necessary to support their business model, however, local governments do not currently have the authority to negotiate parking time limit extensions under state law.

This bill will provide state and local authorities the option to allow the parking of vehicles owned by carsharing organizations where the time of parking is officially limited with signs or parking meters without regard to the time limits posted. Authorities may enter into agreement with carsharing organizations to authorize parking and to establish fees and conditions of operation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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As elected officials, one of our prime duties is finding ways to remove unneeded regulations that stand in the way of improving our business climate. Senate Bill 235 will eliminate an outdated regulation that will allow for the creation of a new alternative transportation option for Wisconsin's communities.

This new option, referred to as car-sharing, provide members with a network of vehicles in which they may rent, drive and then return anywhere within a defined district. The cars are usually returned to a municipal parking spot that will have posted time limits. Under current law, municipalities do not have the flexibility to negotiate parking rates beyond their posted time limits.

This legislation will allow, but not mandate, communities to work with car-sharing companies to set an appropriate parking fee for their vehicles. Madison has already publically stated their interest in making this service available. I would assume other larger communities will also pursue this option upon passage of the bill.

This new option provides a number of benefits for the individual. They have a car at their disposal without having to worry about paying for upkeep, gas or parking. Unlike a standard rental car, the driver doesn't have to pick up the car or return the car to a specific lot.

Car-sharing is a growing transportation alternative worldwide. It currently is offered in 30 cities around the world, with 14 of those in North America. The Twin Cities just recently became the latest to join the club.

Thank you for taking my testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.