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## South Beloit OKs use of electric cars

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SOUTH BELOIT -

In the next few weeks, South Beloit drivers could see a somewhat unusual sight: Andy Manderla cruising along at 25 mph on his way to work in an all-electric vehicle.

Manderla, who lives in South Beloit, has been interested in purchasing an electric car for the last five years, he said, to use for his 2½-mile commute to work in Beloit, Wis. The state legalized the use of such cars, known as neighborhood electric vehicles, in January 2006, but left it up to individual municipalities to pass ordinances allowing them.

On Monday, the South Beloit City Council unanimously granted Manderla permission to drive an electric car on city streets, paving the way for other drivers to potentially follow suit. The ordinance takes effect immediately.

Manderla told the council that he intends to purchase a ZENN (Zero Emission No Noise) vehicle that he and his wife will share for their short work commutes. Unlike a hybrid, the ZENN does not run on any fossil fuel — it is completely electric and runs solely on batteries.

The car has a top speed of 25 mph and is legal only on streets where the maximum speed limit is 35 mph. Owners charge the car by plugging it into a standard electrical outlet. The car takes about eight hours to fully charge and can be driven for 35 miles on a single charge.

And it comes equipped with all the features of a "real car," Manderla said. "It's not a modified golf cart."

Tim Thompson, of Green Autos in Janesville, Wis., brought a ZENN car down to South Beloit last week for city officials to test drive.

"I was amazed at the car," Interim Police Chief Tom Fearn said. "The whole car seems pretty solid, and it's a unique idea. The only major drawback I see is you would have to be careful driving it so no one runs you over."

Green Autos has four ZENN cars in stock, according to its Web site, with pricing starting around \$12,500. Manderla, who plans to purchase his car from the Janesville dealer, considers it a bargain. It costs one to two cents per mile to operate the car, which doesn't release pollutants into the air.

"With all the talk of global warming, I think everyone should try to do their part," Manderla said. "If people see them out there on the street, hopefully it will raise awareness."

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