

## BMW expands ReachNow mobile services

LOS ANGELES: German automaker BMW announced on Tuesday in Los Angeles that it is expanding its ReachNow program with new mobile tools and adding a city location: New York's trendy Brooklyn borough.



BMW ReachNow, launched in Seattle, Washington state in April, is adding services to its initial offering, the chief executive of the new program Steve Banfield said at a news conference on the first day of AutoMobility, a car show focused on mobile technologies.

Among the new services offered on the ReachNow app is a car-sharing service, rivaling Uber and Lyft, that allows a person to hail a ride and personalise it by selecting temperature, music or even a "do not disturb" feature.

It will launch in test mode in Seattle on 8 December before being tested in other cities.

ReachNow also is expanding its shared car rental service, similar to Zipcar and launched in April that until now was available only in Seattle and Portland, Oregon with 800 BMWs. That service for the first time will leave the West Coast and head east, to Brooklyn, where 250 BMWs and Minis will be waiting for customers.

In Manhattan, a pilot programme for residential buildings will give residents access to a fleet of electric BMW i3 or BMW Series 3 vehicles that will remain onsite for their exclusive leasing.

ReachNow also will allow longer-term car rentals of two to five days with members able to schedule a vehicle to be delivered at their preferred time and location. This reserve service will begin in Seattle in early 2017.

Another pilot programme for owners of MINI 2016 or 2017 model year vehicles will be launched in Seattle. The Share programme enables MINI owners to rent their vehicles when they do not need access to it, helping to offset the cost of car ownership.

The Share service faces competition from other companies such as Turo or Car2go.

BMW and other big automakers like General Motors, Ford and Mercedes are racing ahead to develop full suites of mobile technologies.

AutoMobility LA is being held through Thursday at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The event combines the former Connected Car Expo and the press days of the LA auto show.

The 10-day public show opens Friday and will feature 1,000 vehicles, including 50 new models.

*Source: AFP*

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