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Ecologically-conscious Scott Harrison (left) and James Beddome have launched a bicycle taxi service in Winnipeg.

It's a Wheely Green taxi ride

Environmentalists use pedal power

By Meghan Hurley

THE only tailpipe emissions expelled from James Beddome's taxi are produced when he eats a large bean sandwich.

Beddome and two of his friends are bringing eco-friendly commuting to Winnipeg — bike taxis that they say can get you from one end of the city to the other in an hour.

"We are pretty avid environmentalists and are politically involved in the environmental movement," said Beddome, who is the president of the Green Party of Manitoba. "I've always been interested in this kind of thing."

Beddome, along with business partners,

Scott Harrison and Kaitlin McIntyre, have a fleet of three taxis. Their company is aptly called Wheely Green.

The bike taxis look like adult-sized tricycles with carts for customers to sit in at the back. They boast cushioned seats and come equipped with helmets for customers who feel uneasy whipping around the city in an open-air taxi.

Those who want more room during their ride home can request a taxi that looks more like a rickshaw pulled by a bike.

It has a good-sized trailer that fits three people and has room for groceries, luggage or any other cargo, Beddome said.

Fare prices aren't set in stone, but they're significantly less than regular taxis since they don't need to pay for fuel.

For safe riding at night, the taxis are equipped with front headlights and a light at the back. Even with headlights, some people question their safety.

Mike Waite, Manitoba Safety Council

president, said an environmentally friendly ride is great, but the bike taxis are "risky business."

"Bike traffic here in Winnipeg, although we're attempting to make it safer, we still have a long way to go," Waite said.

"The infrastructure right now doesn't support another mode of transportation that will slow us down and complicate the system even more."

Bike taxis are popular in many other major cities in the United States and Canada, such as New York, Phoenix and Vancouver.

"We are in a flat city so you don't have to battle the hills," Beddome said.

"I can't imagine guys doing this in Vancouver where it's a little bit more hilly than in Winnipeg."

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See video at winnipegfreepress.com