

Public using EV charging stations

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Nearly 50 sessions in less than a month

Only a few weeks have gone by since the city opened its new electric vehicle charging stations to the public and already there have been 47 charging sessions, a number that puts a big grin on Mike Reed's face.

"That is a lot more usage than I anticipated," Reed said, adding that the first charging session took place on June 30. "I am excited by the use of the charging stations."

In less than a month, Reed, the city's public works director, said the city's electrical vehicle charging stations have also dispensed over 500 kilowatt hours, which he said has reduced 210 kg of greenhouse gas emissions.

Reed said the city's electric vehicle charging stations are part of the ChargePoint network, the nation's largest electric vehicle network, as well as PlugShare, that allows users to find and review charging stations and to connect with other plug-in vehicle owners.

Connecting with other plug-in vehicle owners is definitely invaluable, especially in California where there are only about 108,264 out of the state's 33.5 million registered vehicles, according to the DMV.

Of the approximately 213,000 vehicles registered in Tulare County, 382 are electric vehicles, according to the state DMV.

So far, Reed said 12 of those vehicles, including the new Chevrolet Bolt, Ford Focus, Fiat 500e and the BMW i3, have been utilizing the city's new dual-port Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations in the Centennial Plaza Park parking lot.

Reed said he expects more usage of the charging stations, especially since nearly every major car manufacturer now offers an electric vehicle.

"Most leading automakers have made some sort of commitment to electric vehicles, ranging from going all-electric in a few years to converting a significant percentage of all cars sold to electric vehicles," said Reed, adding that electric vehicle production has grown 10 times in the last four years. "And forecasts suggest that electric vehicles will comprise 4 percent to 15 percent of all car sales by 2020."

Reed said he also expects more electric vehicle owners to utilize the city's Level 2 charging stations because he said they are about six times faster than Level 1 residential charging stations. The city's charging stations, Reed said, can fill up a battery with a 100-mile range in about four hours.

At a rate of \$1.25 per hour, Reed said users can save thousands of dollars in fuel savings by going from 12 cents per mile to 6 cents per mile or less. Along with no oil changes, fluids to manage and other costly maintenance, "the appeal of owning an electric vehicle really adds up," Reed said.

Reed said owning an electric vehicle is also becoming more affordable, especially with federal, state and local incentives.

Reed said purchase incentives include a federal income tax credit up to \$7,500 and noted that the Clean Vehicle Rebate Project (CVRP) offers up to \$2,500 for the purchase or lease of eligible electric vehicles.

As part of its commitment to improve the air quality in the San Joaquin Valley, Reed said the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District strongly supports the advancement and sustainability of clean-air technology. Reed said Valley residents and businesses can apply for an additional rebate up to \$3,000 on the purchase from eligible vehicles.

Reed said local utility providers are also providing incentives. He said Southern California Edison is offering a \$450 rebate for new or used electric vehicles from the Clean Fuel Rebate as well as special electric vehicle rate plans for charging at home.

Reed said residents can find rebates, discounts, tax breaks and other incentives available for clean technology vehicles by visiting the DriveClean website — www.driveclean.ca.gov.

However, Reed said there have been some issues with the city's new electric vehicle charging stations, specifically with people parking their gas-powered vehicles there.

To fix the growing problem, Reed said he is in the process of having electric vehicle charging signs installed and also has plans on amending the city's traffic ordinance to specifically say that the charging stalls are reserved for electrical vehicle charging only.

After the ordinance is amended, Reed said anyone violating the updated traffic ordinance will face consequences.

"My goal is to get the signs first and then go to city council with the amendment to our traffic ordinance," Reed said.

In terms of additional charging stations throughout the city, Reed said if there is a need, he will work on getting more.