

Companies push for vehicle charging stations in Maryland

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Conowingo, MD - Electric vehicle charging station companies participated with officials from General Motors and Tesla during a recent hearing by the Maryland Public Service Commission. The MPSC is currently considering a [\\$104.7 million proposal](#) to install 24,000 electric vehicle charging stations across Maryland.

The proposal was made by state utility companies such as Baltimore Gas and Electric Co., Delmarva Power and Light Co., Potomac Electric Power Co., and Potomac Edison Co. If enacted, the initiative would make Maryland home to the second largest electric vehicle charging network in the nation.

Advocates of the proposal say the program would enable Maryland to reach its goal to have at least 300,000 zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2025. Yet the proposal is also controversial because the utility companies involved have proposed to fund the program with rate increases, which are never a popular solution among the public at large.

Baltimore Gas and Electric Co., which would spend \$48.1 million on the program, said the average resident could see approximately 35 cents added to their bills. Customers would be eligible for rebates by helping the company cover the cost of the electric vehicle charger installations.

"Lower income ratepayers will subsidize middle and high-income ratepayers since they cannot afford [electric vehicles] in today's [economic] climate," said Paul Verchinski, a Columbia resident.

Patrick Bean, Tesla's manager of policy and business development, said the program is a foundational investment for the companies. The program could improve the infrastructure for electric vehicle users and boost the entire electric vehicle industry.

The biggest inhibitor to those considering buying an electric vehicle is the concern about where they'd charge their vehicle, Bean says. It's easy enough for those who have a single family home, but it becomes more complicated for those who are renting.

"If they don't have [a] solution, they're less likely to buy [an electric] car," Bean said.

For instance, only a little over 25,000 [electric vehicles](#) were sold in the U.S. in June 2018 compared to the 59,841 [Subarus](#) sold in the same month.

What's more, if electric vehicle owners are only able to charge their vehicles at home, then buying an electric vehicle loses its appeal.

Director of General Motors, Britta Gross, says their company is advocating for the program because of the major need for charging stations.

"General Motors envisions a future with zero crashes, zero emissions, and zero congestion," said Gross. "The only way [we can] achieve that mantra is through electric vehicles, shared vehicles and also autonomous vehicles. It is [the] future of transportation."

Electric vehicles may have a greater future than autonomous and shared vehicles. Although 80 percent of all [bumper scratches](#) happen when a driver is parking their own car, [recent accidents](#) involving autonomous vehicles have made the autonomous car a questionable vehicle to consumers and lawmakers alike.

Similarly, ride-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft had originally touted their ability to reduce traffic congestion. Yet New York City [recently put a cap](#) on how many ride-sharing vehicles can be on the road at once due to ride-sharing vehicles causing *more* traffic.

Unlike both autonomous vehicles and shared vehicles, electric vehicles don't cause increased traffic or increase the risk for traffic accidents. In fact, the market for electric vehicles is expected to jump from [\\$3 million to \\$125 million](#) by 2030. This jump is also expected to have positive ripple effects. For instance, expanding the manufacturing and sale of electric vehicles would have an impact on the metalworking fluids industry, which will reach [\\$9.74 billion](#) by 2020.

Utility companies that were questioned about their funding strategies during the recent hearing said it's unlikely the charging stations will go unused. In addition, drivers that don't own electric vehicles would still benefit from reduced emissions.

Yet Verchinski says he doesn't support the idea of funding the charging station program through increases in utility rates.

"Should you just throw money at this and see what sticks?" he asked. "You have a fiduciary responsibility to the ratepayers."

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