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Burlington is all abuzz about electric vehicles

Two new initiatives announced in Burlington

by Lynn Monty

Electric vehicle technology rolled out on the bricks of Burlington's Church Street Marketplace on Saturday.

Drive Electric Vermont, a partnership to promote electric vehicle ownership in the state, sponsored Plug-In Day to increase public awareness of electric vehicles as an affordable, safe, and reliable transportation option for Vermonters.

The buzz is electric vehicles increase energy independence, contribute to healthier air and lower carbon emissions.

Electric Vehicle Plug-In Day was held in front of City Hall in Burlington and stretched up the block with vehicles on display from Burlington Mitsubishi, Freedom Nissan, Heritage Automotive and Shearer Chevrolet.

Elise Godfrey was in Burlington from New York City for a wedding and stopped by Church Street to take a look at the electric vehicles with her brother Chris Godfrey of Sherborn, Mass. She said, "I don't drive a lot. I take the train, except when I drive to Vermont once every 10 years."

"It opens your mind up a little," Chris Godfrey said of the event. "I'm waiting for the old combustion engine car to die. They build them so well it takes a long time to wear them out, but the day will come I think."

Two new initiatives to support electric vehicles in Vermont were announced at the event. Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger, a representative from the Ministry of Quebec, Department of Public Service Deputy Commissioner Darren Springer, Director of Transportation VEIC Karen Glitman, State Treasurer Beth Pearce, and state Rep. Diane Lanpher were on hand for the event.

The first initiative expands the State Infrastructure Bank loan program administered by the Vermont Economic Development Agency.

This initiative was spearheaded by a local investment working group including state Treasurer Pearce, VEDA Executive Director Jo Bradley, VEIC Transportation Director Karen Glitman, state Rep. Diane Lanpher, and community and business leaders.

The second initiative, developed by the Agency of Natural Resources and administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, provides financial resources for electric vehicle charging stations in all of Vermont's designated downtowns.

"Vermonters are increasingly choosing to make their next car an electric one," said Karen Glitman, Director of Transportation Efficiency at Vermont Energy Investment Corporation. "There is a growing recognition that electric vehicles are a great option for many Vermont drivers for providing affordable, safe, reliable, clean transportation."

Owners of innovative car models were on hand to answer car and charging questions. Tesla electric vehicles, a Roadster and a Model S, were on display.

Event partners included Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing, Green Mountain Power, 350.org, Burlington Electric Dept, SunCommon, Lowes, and Hydro-Quebec.

According to Drive Electric Vermont's website, there are 354 plug-in vehicles registered in the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles database. That's a 220 percent increase since tracking plug-in passenger cars began last July.

Ten different plug-in passenger car models are registered in Vermont, and Toyota Prius Plug-ins are the most popular, representing about half of the electric cars registered.