
Opinion

SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: The electric (car) wave is here

By Kurt Wolf

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Although you may not be aware of it, the electric car wave has reached Marblehead's shores. In 2018, Marblehead residents purchased or leased 38 electric or hybrid vehicles, up from 18 in 2017, 12 in 2016, and 5 each in 2014 and 2015, and all indications are that figure will double in 2019. Although these numbers are still relatively small, the trend is impressive and an encouraging sign that local drivers are gradually overcoming a number of speed bumps in their consideration of making their next purchase an electric or hybrid vehicle.

As an electric car owner myself, probably the No. 1 hurdle I had in my purchase decision early on was the fear of running out of charge. This was not helped by the fact that there is only one semipublic charging station in Marblehead, a Tesla charger behind the Harbor Light Inn, which made me believe the same might be true elsewhere. However, ranges for electric vehicles have improved markedly in recent years. The Nissan Leaf has a range of 150 miles per charge, the Chevy Bolt has a range of nearly 240 miles per charge, and Tesla vehicles have ranges between 249-310 miles per charge. Further, the Marblehead Municipal Light Department (MMLD) is working with a number of local organizations to install additional public vehicle chargers using state grants funded in part from the VW emissions litigation settlement. Finally, with apps such as Plugshare, it is now fairly easy to identify available public chargers for any trip. It's also worth noting that public charging stations are getting more and more efficient. For example, newly announced supercharging stations will provide a Tesla Model 3 as much as 75 miles of charge in just five minutes.

The cost of installing an electric charger at home is another consideration. For owners with a garage, the best option is to upgrade service to 220V and install a Level 2 Residential Electric Vehicle Charger, which MMLD will provide free of charge if you sign up for their scheduled charging program. For owners like

myself who do not have a garage but have an available electrical outlet at or near their vehicle parking space, it is also possible to charge an electric vehicle using standard 110V service without the need to install a Level 2 charger. The obvious difference will be in the rate of charging as the 110V service will only charge at the rate of approximately 4 miles/hour. Still, for the average Boston commuter (40 miles round trip), this is more than sufficient.

Although many electric and hybrid vehicles are still more expensive than comparable gasoline powered vehicles, the cost of batteries continues to go down making these vehicles increasingly more affordable. In addition, a \$7,500 federal tax credit and a \$1,500 state credit are still available for most electric cars, and both Chevrolet and Nissan offer Marblehead residents additional savings due to our membership in a municipal wholesale electric company. After factoring in the applicable tax credits and a local incentive of \$7,000, a new Bolt is roughly \$20,000, and after deducting a \$5,000 local discount, a new Leaf is roughly \$16,000. Tesla has also announced that its entry level Model 3 is now available for \$35,000 after netting out tax incentives, and used Teslas still under the eight-year battery warranty are available for under \$30,000.

Since more than a quarter of Marblehead's carbon emissions come from the cars we drive, switching to an electric or hybrid vehicle is good for our environment and easy on the pocketbook. Just go to <https://marbleheadelectric.com/ev-vehicles-chargers.html> to see what you can save in fuel and maintenance costs. Hoping to see many more of you driving one soon.

Kurt James is a member of the Sustainable Marblehead board of directors. For information, visit <http://sustainablemarblehead.org>.

Upcoming events

"Greening Your Business": 6:30-8 p.m. April 25 at Masonic Temple, 62 Pleasant St., Marblehead. The Marblehead Chamber of Commerce will host the program.

Pesticide-Free Lawn and Garden Care: 7-8:30 p.m. May 1 at Abbot Public Library, 235 Pleasant St., Marblehead. Chip Osborne will present the program, hosted by Sustainable Marblehead.

Sustainable Marblehead Clean Energy Fair: 3:30-5:30 p.m. May 19 at Tower School, 75 West Shore Drive, Marblehead.