

MARBLEHEAD REPORTER

SUSTAINABLE MARBLEHEAD: The future has arrived

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It wasn't that long ago that environmentally friendly cars — hybrids like Prius and electric vehicles like Tesla — were somewhat of a novelty. In addition to being good cars, they allowed owners to make a statement about their commitment to reducing pollution emitted from fuel-powered automobiles. As my family has owned two of these cars, I can attest to the fact that they are high-performance, economical and fun to drive. Despite that, when they appeared on the market it seemed likely that while their niche would grow, it would be a long time, if ever, before they would dominate the auto industry.

Today, however, we have reached an inflection point where the demand for electrical vehicles is about to explode. Concern about the climate crisis has finally pushed the imperative of reducing carbon emissions to the forefront of public policy and industry priorities. Since his inauguration, President Biden has put forth an ambitious climate agenda that includes electrifying the government's fleet of vehicles and installing 500,000 electric vehicle public charging stations by 2030. His administration is also expected to announce additional initiatives in the coming months to encourage and boost the production and sales of electric vehicles.

The private sector is also moving on the issue. General Motors announced recently that it will phase out all gas- and diesel-powered cars and trucks and sell only zero-emission vehicles by 2035. This is a huge commitment, made most likely in response to Volkswagen's promise of an electric version for each of its models by 2030. Ford has also announced plans to invest \$29 billion by 2025 and have 40 hybrid and fully electric vehicles in its model lineup. Meanwhile, automobile manufacturers have backed away from their efforts to stop California from setting its own stricter emissions standards, recognizing that cleaner cars are the wave of the future.

Here in Massachusetts, Gov. Baker's 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap requires that all new cars sold in the state must be electric by 2035. This is a significant step toward reaching our clean energy and climate goals. The state's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs reports that passenger cars are responsible for more than a quarter of the state's carbon emissions. This is consistent with the findings of Sustainable Marblehead's Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report, released in 2018, which identified our major sources of carbon pollution.

What does this mean for the residents of Marblehead? There is no need to wait until 2035 to replace your gas-powered car with electric! The market for electric cars is growing rapidly, with new and pre-owned choices spanning a growing price range. To learn more about the options available, visit <https://greenenergyconsumers.org/drivegreen>.

In addition, the Marblehead Municipal Light Department is offering electric vehicle discounts and charger rebates. To learn more, visit <https://marbleheadelectric.com/ev-vehicles-chargers.html>. For example, one of their current offers, available until Feb. 28, is a Chevy Bolt discount of up to \$17,000 for MMLD customers at Quirk Chevy Braintree.

Marblehead residents are also eligible to receive a free wireless-enabled Level 2 residential electric vehicle charger from MMLD when they sign up for its scheduled charging program.

To support this growing market, municipalities across the country are investing in public charging stations. Many Marblehead homeowners who purchase an electric car will either charge their cars using an exterior outlet or install a high-speed charger. But for residents who live in apartment complexes or do not have the ability to install a high-speed charger, access to public chargers will be essential. Recognizing this need, MMLD has installed two public chargers in their parking lot on Commercial Street and will soon install others behind Warwick Place on Round House Road and at the Mary Alley

Municipal Building. We are hopeful that more public charging stations will be installed in other areas of town, including near the main shopping areas to attract out-of-town visitors.

Electric vehicles are the cars of the future. They lower carbon emissions, cost less to operate, have lower maintenance costs and boast superior driving performance. Our conversion from carbon-emitting cars and trucks to electric vehicles will play a critical role in helping our town reach its goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2040. We hope you will join us for the ride!

For information on Sustainable Marblehead, visit <https://sustainablemarblehead.org>.